

POS 3204: Political Behavior

Class Periods: Tuesdays period 4, Thursdays periods 4-5

Location: MAT 016 (Tue), TUR 2306 (Thu)

Academic Term: Fall 2021

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Tue 1:00-2:30, Wed 12:00-1:30, and by appointment, Zoom id 831-661-6708. Unless you are notified otherwise, office hours will be held online via Zoom.

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Main text (recommended but not required):

Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 14th ed. (CQ Press, 2018).

All assigned readings (see the course outline below) except for chapters from Theiss-Morse et al. are posted in the Files folder on Canvas (<https://elearning.ufl.edu>). Most can also be accessed directly online.

Course Overview:

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to several major themes relating to public opinion, voting behavior, and political participation – primarily, though not exclusively, in the United States. How much do ordinary citizens know about politics and government? How complete is their understanding of important issues, and to what extent do preferences regarding those issues guide their voting choices? Why don't more Americans participate in politics, either at the polls or in other ways? Do low participation rates mean that the United States (or any other country) is less "democratic" than its citizens would like to believe? Why has the public become increasingly mistrustful of their governmental leaders and institutions? These are just a few of the questions that we will examine over the next few months.

Students should review the syllabus carefully to familiarize themselves with such matters as reading assignments, exams and written essays, grading criteria, and other aspects of the course. You will note that there is one textbook assigned (*Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 14th ed.) -- though this is less "required" reading than a source which, along with my lecture slides, should prove helpful especially when it comes time to prepare for the midterm and final exams. While students will usually benefit from reading the text, whether you do so is an individual choice. Nothing from the book that is not also covered in class will be included on either written exam.

There are, however, several short articles assigned for each week during the semester. Almost all are internet readings that illustrate how ideas and patterns discussed in class play out in the real world of American politics. These readings are easily digested – they are relatively brief (with one or two exceptions) and in most cases written for a lay audience – and provide the basis for the class discussions that we will have every Thursday. **Note that there are four articles on polling that students should read by our first Thursday session on August 26.**

Grades:

Grades will be based on the following:

Midterm exam	20 percent (Thursday, Oct 14, 10:40 a.m.)
Class participation	20 percent
Periodic written assignments	30 percent

Final exam 30 percent (Wednesday, Dec 15, 7:30 a.m.)
 Minus grades will (if appropriate) be assigned in this course. Information about grades and grading policies at UF can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Both midterm and final are open-book, unproctored exams. (Although the final is cumulative, it will emphasize material from the second half of the course, i.e., after the midterm.) Each exam will be posted on Canvas at the designated time, and each will be due exactly two hours later. Further details regarding the administration and content of those exams will be provided at a later date. No make-ups will be given except in the case of a fully documented medical or other emergency; anyone who fails to take either exam without such documentation will receive a score of zero. Grading for both exams will be based on a curve, to be determined by the distribution of scores.

Written Assignments: As shown in the listing of daily and weekly assignments, we will be covering twelve topics (beginning with "measuring public opinion" and ending with "linkage/representation") during the semester. Students are required to write short essays on any five of these. Step one is to find an internet article (preferably one that is fairly recent) relevant to the week's topic. Since the main purpose here is for you to see how ideas discussed in class play out in the real world, do not base your essay on an academic source (journal article or book chapter) or on a Pew, Gallup, or other poll report/press release without first getting my approval. Material written by academics for a lay audience is acceptable (*Monkey Cage* articles being a good, but not the only, example). *Note: Internet articles that appear on the syllabus or are discussed in class should not be selected for these assignments.*

Once an article of interest has been identified (if you're not sure whether it's appropriate, send me the link and I will let you know one way or the other), step two is to write a 2-page essay (typed, single-spaced, 12-point font, with a bibliography at the end that is not included in the page count) briefly summarizing the content of the article and relating it to one or more themes covered in class.

Don't lose track of where you stand because there will be no opportunities for extra credit at the end, e.g., if there are no more weeks left in the semester and you realize that you've only written four essays, you will receive a zero for the one that's missing. On the other hand . . . Students who complete their five required essays by **November 2** will receive a one-half letter grade bonus on their final (average) score for this part of the course.

Essays should be submitted to the appropriate Assignments folder in Canvas **no later than noon** on the day they are due. In most cases, they will be read, graded, and returned to students within a week of their completion. **Anything submitted after the deadline will be penalized one full letter grade, plus one additional letter grade if turned in the following day – after which the essay will not be read or graded at all.**

Any written assignment (including midterm and final exams) that does not constitute original work by the student will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct, up to and including receiving a grade of zero and a failing grade in the class.

Strong essays from past students will be posted from time to time on Canvas so you can get a sense of what I'm looking for. In the meantime, here are some basic guidelines that you may find helpful:

- do not summarize at length (include the link for your article and I will read it online; a detailed summary would be redundant);
- do not simply regurgitate points made by myself or by other students during class discussion – bring some insight(s) of your own to the task; at the same time . . .

- purely personal opinions are bad (e.g., you believe that mail-in balloting either does or does not increase the likelihood of voter fraud), statements based on evidence are good (e.g., what do studies show one way or the other on this issue?);
- focus on a single theme (two at the most, and only if they're related) so that you're able to do it justice; and
- cite any book, article, internet source, or idea that is not your own. You should do this by including an alphabetical list of references at the end of your essay just as you would with a term paper in another class. In-text cites should take the following form: (Craig 2020) – do not use footnotes or insert full article/book titles in the text. If I want to know what (Craig 2020) is, I should be able to find out by looking at your list of references.

Class Participation: The first part of your grade on this component is attendance: you can't participate unless you're in class. The second part will be based on the extent to which you contribute to our discussions. The third part has to do with talk points that you are expected to submit on a weekly basis. Each student should (a) develop one talk point based on the week's assigned readings, (b) write a short, single-spaced paragraph (don't just ask a question without speculating on what the answer to that question might be), and (c) submit it to the appropriate Canvas folder by 5 p.m. on Wednesday prior to our class the next day. The goal is for you to identify topics about which you would like to know more or that you do not believe that the readings address adequately. Some of those topics will probably arise during my lectures (during which you are free to ask questions) but the talk points will also allow us to explore subject matter that might otherwise be overlooked. Keep in mind that talk points are a required assignment: failure to submit one (or submitting one that shows little thought on your part) will result in a zero – and an accumulation of zeroes can have a serious impact on your overall participation grade.

Some concluding points:

- Attendance is required. Students who can reasonably anticipate an absence should inform me by email as soon as is practical and prior to the anticipated absence. Absences may be excused with documentation of a University, military, or legal obligation, illness, or bereavement.
- As noted above, students are bound by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on the written essays, will suffer appropriate sanctions and be referred to university authorities for further action.
- There will be times when I need to communicate with the class as a group. In those instances, I will do so either through Outlook (using a listserv) or, more often, via Canvas. Students should check their incoming mail regularly so as not to miss any important information. The best way for students to connect with me directly is through Outlook (sccraig@ufl.edu). If a reply is needed, I will try to get back to you quickly.
- If you are unable to connect with me during my official office hours, or if you wish to discuss matters that are confidential, feel free to request a one-on-one meeting and we will determine a time that works for both of us.
- Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures (not including student presentations). However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a

recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

- Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

COVID guidelines:

In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and others.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit the link below for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus. <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/>
- You are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class. Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.
- If you are sick, stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email covid@shcc.ufl.edu) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the [UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website](#) for more information.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test & Protect, you are not permitted to use any on-campus facilities. Students attempting to attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.
- Continue to regularly visit coronavirus.UFHealth.org and coronavirus.ufl.edu for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.

- Depending on external events, the technological capability of our classroom, and other factors, it is possible that this class will also be offered synchronously (via HyFlex Zoom) at some point during the semester. The main idea here would be to provide an alternative platform for students who are uncomfortable with the idea of attending class in person. Moving exclusively online is also an option (for a period not to exceed 14 days according to current university policy) if your instructor contracts COVID. or is determined to have had close contact with someone who is infected, and is no longer cleared for coming to campus.
- Be aware that any student who is not cleared for coming to campus is not permitted to attend class. Should you choose to attend without receiving clearance, you will be asked to leave.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (Aug 23-27): Introduction/Measuring Public Opinion

Assigned Readings:

- Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Appendix: Survey Research Methods.
- Dan Balz, "2020 Presidential Polls Suffered Worst Performance in Decades. Report Says," *Washington Post* (7/18/21).
- Mirta Galesic and Wandí Bruine de Bruin, "Election Polls Are More Accurate If They Ask Participants How Others Will Vote," *The Conversation* (11/18/20).
- Robert Y. Shapiro, "Despite the 2020 Election Results, You Can Still Trust Polling. Mostly." *Monkey Cage* (12/3/20).
- Ariel Edwards-Levy, "How Do Americans Feel about Their Finances? It Depends on Whether You Mention Trump," *huffpost.com* (8/1/17).
- Lucy Morgan, "From the Archives: Lawton Chiles' Camp Admits to 'Mystery' Calls against Jeb Bush Campaign," *Tampa Bay Times* (6/8/15).

Week 2 (Aug 30- Sep 3): Voter Competence

Assigned Readings:

- Barbara A. Bardes and Robert W. Oldendick, *Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind*, 5th ed. Ch. 6.
- Catherine Rampell, "Americans – Especially But Not Exclusively Trump Voters – Believe Crazy, Wrong Things," *Washington Post* (12/28/16).
- Joel Rose, "Even If It's 'Bonkers,' Poll Finds Many Believe QAnon and Other Conspiracy Theories," *npr.org* (12/30/20).
- Eric W. Dolan, "Study: People with Less Political Knowledge Think They Know a Lot about Politics," *PsyPost* (4/16/18).
- Aaron Blake, "A New Study Suggests Fake News Might Have Won Donald Trump the 2016 Election," *Washington Post* (4/3/18).
- Andrew Gelman, "Do Shark Attacks Swing Elections?" *Monkey Cage* (10/28/16).
- Internet essay #1 due Aug 31 (topic: polling)

Week 3 (Sep 6-10): Partisanship

Assigned Readings:

- Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 4.
- Yascha Mounk, "Republicans Don't Understand Democrats – and Democrats Don't Understand Republicans," *The Atlantic* (6/23/19).
- Michael Tesler, "In 2008, Everyone Thought the Recession Was Bad. But in 2020, Many Americans' Views Depend on Their Party," *Monkey Cage* (6/30/20).
- Meredith Dost et al., "Is President Trump's Rhetoric Racist? It Depends on Whom You Ask." *Monkey Cage* (8/12/19).

Benjamin Toff and Elizabeth Suhay, "How Worried Are You about an Impending Trade War? That Might Depend on What Your Fellow Party Members Think," *Monkey Cage* (7/12/18).

Sarah E. Croco and Jacob Silverman, "Trump Didn't Shake Hands. Pelosi Ripped Up His Speech. Do Americans Care about Civility?" *Monkey Cage* (2/5/20).

Internet essay #2 due Sep 7 (topic: voter competence)

Week 4 (Sep 13-17): Ideology

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 6.

Ezra Klein, "For Elites, Politics Is Driven by Ideology. For Voters, It's Not," *Vox* (11/9/17).

Eric Levitz, "America's Political Mood Is Now the 'Most Liberal Ever Recorded,'" *New York Magazine/Intelligencer* (6/8/19).

Robb Willer and Jan Voelkel, "Why Progressive Candidates Should Invoke Conservative Values," *New York Times* (11/30/19).

Lee Drutman, "The Moderate Middle Is a Myth," *fivethirtyeight.com* (9/24/19).

Sasha Issenberg, "Born This Way: The New Weird Science of Hardwired Political Identity," *New York Magazine* (4/8/12).

Internet essay #3 due Sep 14 (topic: partisanship)

Week 5 (Sep 20-24): Political Learning: Where Do Our Opinions Come From?

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 7.

Robinson Meyer, "The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News," *The Atlantic* (3/8/18).

Maneesh Arora et al., "What Helps Non-Black People Support Black Lives Matter? A Signal from Someone in Their Own Ethnic Group," *Monkey Cage* (6/18/20).

Ronald Inglehart, "The Coronavirus May Trigger Tribal Instincts. In Times of Crisis, People Want Strong Leaders," *Monkey Cage* (4/10/20).

Alyssa N. Rockenbach et al., "Professors Change Few Minds on Politics – But Conservative Ones May Have More Influence," *Monkey Cage* (3/2/20).

Natalie Jacewicz, "What Shapes Your Political Beliefs at 18, 35, and 50," *thecut.com* (4/28/17).

Internet essay #4 due Sep 21 (topic: ideology)

Week 6 (Sep 27-Oct 1): Social Groups/Conflict and Identity

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 5.

Erin C. Cassese et al., "How 'Hostile Sexism' Came to Shape Our Politics," *Monkey Cage* (10/2/18).

Andrew L. Whitehead et al., "Despite Porn Stars and Playboy Models, White Evangelicals Aren't Rejecting Trump. Here's Why," *Monkey Cage* (3/26/18).

Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu, "Trump Didn't Bring White Working-Class Voters to the Republican Party. The Data Suggest He Kept Them Away," *Monkey Cage* (4/14/21).

Geoffrey Skelley et al., "Why the Suburbs Have Shifted Blue," *fivethirtyeight.com* (12/16/20).

Hakeem Jefferson and Alan Yan, "How the Two-Party System Obscures the Complexity of Black Americans' Politics," *fivethirtyeight.com* (10/6/20).

Internet essay #5 due Sep 28 (topic: political learning)

Week 7 (Oct 4-8): Voting Behavior

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapters 2, 8.

David Brady and Brett Parker, "This Is How Biden Eked Out His 2020 Victory," *Monkey Cage* (2/12/21).

Nathaniel Rakich and Ryan Best, "There Wasn't *That* Much Split-Ticket Voting in 2020," *fivethirtyeight.com* (12/2/20).

Maggie Koerth, "Does Knowing Whom Others Might Vote for Change Whom You'll Vote For?" *fivethirtyeight.com* (12/5/19).

Nate Silver, "Socially Liberal, Fiscally Conservative Voters Preferred Trump in 2016," *fivethirtyeight.com* (2/5/19).

Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux, "Are Some Democratic Voters Reluctant to Support a Gay Candidate?" *fivethirtyeight.com* (11/7/19).

Internet essay #6 due Oct 5 (topic: social groups)

Week 8 (Oct 11-15): Midterm Review/Exam

Internet essay #7 due Oct 12 (topic: voting behavior)

Week 9 (Oct 18-22): Polarization in American Politics

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, review Chapter 4.

Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (Avid Reader Press, 2020), Chapter 3 ("Your Brain on Groups").

Lee Drutman, "How Much Longer Can This Era of Political Gridlock Last?" *fivethirtyeight.com* (3/4/21).

Lee Drutman, "How Hatred Came to Dominate American Politics," *fivethirtyeight.com* (10/5/20).

Ross Butters and Christopher Hare, "Three-Fourths of Americans Regularly Talk Politics Only with Members of Their Own Political Tribe," *Monkey Cage* (5/1/17).

Bernard Tamas, "US Third Parties Can Rein In the Extremism of the Two-Party System," *The Conversation* (6/22/21).

Week 10 (Oct 25-29): Issue Attitudes, Home and Abroad

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, review Chapter 6.

Daniel Treisman, "Why the Poor Don't Vote to Soak the Rich," *Monkey Cage* (2/27/18).

Christopher Ingraham, "Racial Resentment Is the Biggest Predictor of Immigration Attitudes, Study Finds," *Washington Post* (7/10/18).

Alexandra Filindra and Bezya Buyuker, "For Racially Biased Conservative Whites, Owning a Gun Is Just Part of Being a Good Citizen," *Monkey Cage* (3/29/21).

David Leonhardt, "How Abortion Views Are Different," *New York Times* (5/19/21).

Dino Grandoni and Scott Clement, "Americans Like Green New Deal's Goals, But They Reject Paying Trillions to Reach Them," *Washington Post* (11/27/19).

Internet essay #8 due Oct 26 (topic: polarization)

Week 11 (Nov 1-5): Turnout and Participation

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 3.

Amber Phillips, "Examining the Arguments against Voting by Mail: Does It Really Lead to Fraud or Benefit Only Democrats?" *Washington Post* (5/20/20).

Pippa Norris et al., "Why Don't More Americans Vote? Maybe Because They Don't Trust U.S. Elections," *Monkey Cage* (12/26/16).

Joshua Tucker (channeling Victoria Shineman), "Incentivizing Participation Would Increase Voter Turnout and Political Information," *The Monkey Cage* (11/6/12).

Melissa Deckman, "A New Poll Shows How Younger Women Could Help Drive a Democratic Wave in 2018," *Monkey Cage* (3/5/18).

Antoine J. Banks et al., "How Do Black People Channel Their Anger about Racial Injustice? Here's What We Found," *Monkey Cage* (6/29/20).

Internet essay #9 due Nov 2 (topic: issue attitudes)

Week 12 (Nov 8-19): Campaign Effects

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, review Chapter 2.

Maggie Koerth, "How Money Affects Elections," *fivethirtyeight.com* (9/10/18).

Joshua Kalla and David Broockman, "Persuading Voters Is Hard: That Doesn't Mean Campaigns Should Give Up," *Monkey Cage* (10/11/17).

Sue Halpern, "How Campaigns Are Using Marketing, Manipulation, and 'Psychographic Targeting' to Win Elections – and Weaken Democracy," *The New Republic* (10/18/18).

Erin C. Cassese and Mirya Holman, "Campaign Attacks May Hurt Women Candidates More Than Men – Especially on 'Women's' Issues," *Monkey Cage* (8/31/17).

Boris Heersink and Jordan Carr Peterson, "Trump Is Going Back to Holding Rallies. He Might Be Helping Biden," *Monkey Cage* (6/18/20).

Kevin Roose, "We Asked for Examples of Election Misinformation. You Delivered," *New York Times* (11/4/18).

Internet essay #10 due Nov 9 (topic: turnout/participation)

Internet essay #11 due Nov 30 (topic: campaign effects)

No class on Nov 11 (*Veterans Day*)

No class on Nov 23 or Nov 25 (*Thanksgiving*).

Week 13 (Nov 29-Dec 3): Representation and Linkage

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 1.

Lee Rainie et al., "Trust and Distrust in America," Pew Research Center (7/22/19).

David M. Mayer, "The Psychology of Fairness: Why Some Americans Don't Believe the Election Results," *The Conversation* (12/21/20).

Nathan Kalmoe, "A Surprising Number of Americans Endorse Violence Against the Government. Here's Why," *Monkey Cage* (6/14/17).

LaGina Gause, "Black People Have Protested Police Killings for Years. Here's Why Officials Are Finally Responding," *Monkey Cage* (6/12/20).

Dec 7: Final exam review

Internet essay #12 due (topic: representation and linkage)