INTL 8374: Comparative Political Behavior
Spring 2017

Dr. Shane P. Singh
Office: 303 Candler Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00PM
Email: singh@uga.edu
Phone: (706) 542-8422
Course Webpage: http://www.shanepsingh.com/teaching.html

Class Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 3:35-6:35PM

Class Location: 117 Candler Hall

Goal of the Course: This course will cover a variety of topics in the realm of comparative political behavior, including the formation and consequences of partisan identification, the formation and consequences of political attitudes and opinions, the causes and consequences of voter turnout, spatial models of voting, the influence of foreign policy and conflict on vote choice, economic voting, and parties’ vote seeking strategies. The readings will help to (re-)familiarize you with a variety of methodological techniques that are commonly used to assess theories of comparative political behavior. Our universe of cases will generally be individuals and parties in democratic countries, though we may sometimes discuss non-democracies.

Throughout the course we will pay special attention to the interplay between political institutions, contextual factors, and behavioral outcomes. We will think of countries as examples of certain political systems with certain institutional features operating in a particular context; and being embedded in a particular country should influence an individual’s or party’s behavior. By comparing across many countries (and often over time as well), we can hopefully uncover systematic relationships in the field of comparative political behavior.

By the end of the course, students should be able to address questions including, but not limited to, the following:

- Why do individuals turn out to vote or abstain from voting?
- Why do people vote for certain parties?
  - Relatedly, do institutional features and political context moderate the vote decision process?
- How important is the economy to the vote choice?
- How important is foreign policy and conflict to the vote choice?
- Do theories of political behavior, many of which were originally developed in the United States, travel well across borders, or do we need to formulate specific theories for specific countries or regions?

Required Readings:


Several journal articles, all of which are available online

There are numerous readings on the syllabus marked with an asterisk. These are optional. I include them for two main reasons. First, if you read some or all of these each week, you will come to class extra prepared to contribute to discussion. Second, if you are particularly interested in a given topic, the optional readings will help you broaden your knowledge in that area.

Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown:

**General Participation (10%):** I will very rarely lecture in this class. Each class will consist of discussion. As this is a graduate seminar, just showing up is not enough. I expect that class participation will be informed participation; this implies that you will have done all of the required readings ahead of time. You should come to class prepared to discuss these readings and related research possibilities. Your involvement toward the end of the semester, when we will discuss the research papers of students in the class, is particularly important.

**Lead Participation (10%):** In one class period this semester you will be a “lead participant.” Lead participants will briefly present a summary of the materials assigned for the week and will lead the class in discussing and critiquing them. Each time you lead class discussion you should bring a hand out for everyone. This should contain at least four general questions aimed at facilitating class discussion.

**Weekly Analyses (35%):** For each class period, starting with Week 2, students should write an analysis of at least three of that week’s required readings. These must be emailed to me by 9AM on the day of class. You may miss two weekly analyses without penalty. The goal is for you to critically assess the assigned readings. These analyses provide you an opportunity to go beyond summarizing the readings and to reflect on their implications for comparative politics, their strengths, and their weaknesses. You can use your weekly analyses to aid you during class discussion. For each reading you engage, your weekly analysis should, at a minimum, provide or reflect upon the following:

- **Upshot**
  - Provide a three-sentence summary of the upshot of the reading.

- **Theory**
  - Does the work make an original theoretical contribution?
  - What are the assumptions of the theory? Are they plausible?
  - Do the hypotheses follow logically from the theory?

- **Research Design**
  - What is the main data source?
  - Give a short description of the dependent variable and the key independent variable(s). How are these measured? Do these
measures adequately correspond to the theoretical concepts of interest?
  o What empirical method(s) did the author(s) use to test their expectations? Should they have used a different method?
    • How do the authors identify the effect(s) of their key independent variable(s)? If it is an observational design, do they control for all potential confounders? If it is an experimental design, is the experiment internally and externally valid?
  • Empirical Analysis and Findings
    o Are the results interpreted correctly?
    o Do the findings correspond with the expectations?
    o Are there other testable implications of the theory that could be further examined?
    o What are some potential directions for future research?
  • Discussion Questions
    o Construct at least two discussion questions that we can deliberate in class.

Research Paper and Presentation (45%): The primary assignment of the course is an original research paper. You should develop and empirically test a theory directly related to one of the topics we cover in class. The empirical test may be quantitative (it can be observational or experimental) or qualitative. It is important that you put forth an original theoretical argument and explicitly state the hypothesis or hypotheses derived from this argument. Your paper must also have an introduction, a literature review, a discussion of variable operationalization and measurement, and a conclusion. The style of the paper should be that of an article published in a recent issue of the American Journal of Political Science. A one-page summary of your research paper will be due midway through the semester. These summaries will be discussed in class.

You will present your paper toward the end of the semester. Presentations should, at a minimum, include the following:
  • An overview of the research question
  • A discussion of how the research fits with the extant literature
  • A description of the theory and hypotheses
  • A description of the research design
  • A presentation of the (preliminary) empirical analyses and findings
  • A discussion of the (preliminary) findings and their implications

Each presenter will be assigned a discussant, who will be responsible for constructively critiquing the paper. Papers should be made available to the discussant ahead of time. Your role as a discussant will count towards your general participation grade. Presenters may wish to incorporate the suggestions of the discussant and the rest of the audience into their final paper.
Grade Scale:

- >93%: A
- 90-92.99%: A-
- 87-89.99%: B+
- 83-86.99%: B
- 80-82.99%: B-
- 77-79.99%: C+
- 73-76.99%: C
- 70-72.99%: C-
- 60-69.99%: D
- <60%: F

Late/Missed Assignments: Missed assignments will result in a zero without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency. Students will be penalized for late assignments; 20% of the grade for each day late without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency. Make-up exams can be arranged with the instructor with a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency.

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty,” found at: www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.
Readings and Course Schedule: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Readings with a “*” in front are optional.

WEEK 1
January 11: Welcome and Introduction

Hand out syllabi

No Weekly Analysis this week


WEEK 2
January 18: Sources of Public Opinion and Attitude Formation

Lead Participant: Naji Bsisu


WEEK 3
January 25: Voter Turnout

Lead Participant: Shelby Hall


**WEEK 4**
**February 1: Probably No Class (Shane’s Wife Giving Birth Around This Time)**

*If the baby comes sooner or later than expected, we will hold class this day and instead cancel class during an earlier or later week.*

**WEEK 5**
**February 8: The Formation and Consequences of Partisan Identification**

*Lead Participant: Gregory Havrelak*


**WEEK 6**

**February 15: Spatial Models of Vote Choice**

*Lead Participant: Linan Jia*


**WEEK 7**

**February 22: Conditional Spatial Models of Vote Choice**

*Lead Participant: Jenica Moore*


WEEK 8
March 1: Economic Voting/Performance Voting

Lead Participant: Lucas Nussbaum


WEEK 9
March 8: No Class (Spring Break)

WEEK 10
March 15: Conditional Models of Economic Voting/Performance Voting

Lead Participants: Tomas Okal and Jeffrey Auerbach


WEEK 11
March 22: Foreign Policy, Conflict, and Behavior

Bring one-page research paper summaries to class, and be prepared to give a short presentation on your idea. We will discuss each summary as a group.

Lead Participant: Aaron Reid


WEEK 12
March 29: Attitudes Toward Democracy

Lead Participant: Alexandra Snipes


*Anderson, Christopher J., André Blais, Shaun Bowler, Todd Donovan, and Ola Listhaug.


WEEK 13
April 5: How Parties Respond to the Electorate and Seek Votes

Pick discussants and presentation days.

Lead Participant: Neil Williams


2, 7, and 8. [read this first]


WEEK 14
April 12: Compulsory Voting’s Effects on Political Behavior

Lead Participant: Jakub Wondreys


*Singh, Shane P. forthcoming. “Politically Unengaged, Distrusting, and Disaffected Individuals Drive the Link between Compulsory Voting and Invalid Balloting.”* *Political Science Research and Methods.*


**WEEK 15**
April 19: Presentation and Discussion of Research Papers

**WEEK 16**
April 26: Presentation and Discussion of Research Papers (Last Day of Class)

**FINALS WEEK**
May 3: Research papers due in my mailbox, under my door, or directly to me by 5:00PM—not by email.