

Political Science 4520

Electoral Behavior

Fall 2023

Professor Stephen Nicholson
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Office Hours: Thursday 3-4:30 (or after
class)

Course Description:

The purpose of this class is to introduce students to the study of voting behavior, campaigns, and elections in the United States. The course is divided into two interrelated sections. In the first section, we will focus on voting behavior. Here we will look at survey research, political culture, public opinion, political socialization, voter participation and turnout, partisanship, political sophistication and ideology, and myriad theories of voting behavior. Building on our knowledge of the American voter from the first half of the semester, in the second half we will examine elections from the perspective of candidates and campaign strategists. Some of the topics we will focus on include money and elections, campaign strategy, voter mobilization, media, parties and interest groups, and negative advertising. In examining these topics, we will cover a variety of elections with an emphasis on congressional and presidential contests, and ballot propositions. We will also draw heavily on the 2020 election in learning about the electoral process.

Course Readings:

Aldrich, John H., Jamie L. Carson, Brad T. Gomez, and Jennifer L. Merolla. 2023. *Change and Continuity in the 2020 and 2022 Elections*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Wayne, Stephen J. *The Road to the White House 2024*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Course Requirements:

To complete this course successfully, students are required to take two exams, complete a research paper, and participate in class.

Students are expected to attend class regularly and have read the material before coming to class. *Please note: Students are required to adhere to the standards of academic honesty as detailed in the College Handbook*. In particular, please familiarize yourself with rules about plagiarism! If you have any questions about what is or is not plagiarism, please see me.

Students are also expected to be courteous. Please do not talk, eat, sleep, arrive late to, or leave during, class (if you must leave early, please notify me before class begins and exit discreetly). *Turn off cell phones!* Courtesy must also be extended to your classmates. If you do not behave courteously, I reserve the right to drop you from the course.

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary.

Grades:

The final grade is composed of two exams, a paper, and participation. Unless contacted in advance regarding a critical problem, make-ups will not be granted. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per day unless prior arrangements are made. I will likely have one or two extra credit opportunities available towards the end of the semester.

Your grade for the class will be allocated based on the following assignments:

2 Exams	60% (30% each)
Paper	35%
Participation	5%

I will assign grades according to the following scale:

A = 94 and above	B- = 80-83	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-93	C+ = 77-79	D = 64-66
B+ = 87-89	C = 74-76	D- = 60-63
B = 84-86	C- = 70-73	F < Below 60

Class Website:

The class will be administered through the eLC website and you will use it to submit assignments and to receive class announcements. My primary means of communication with you will be through announcements posted in eLC so make sure to check *frequently* (at least daily). To ensure you receive eLC updates for our class automatically via email you will need to do the following: eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications. Please note that you cannot reply to an email I send out via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu emails) so contact me at snicholson@uga.edu instead.

Late Work and Makeups

Make up exams will only be given in cases of an excused absence in accordance with university policies. Examples of excused absences include jury duty, military duty, religious observances, illness, and bereavement for an immediate family member. Excuses should be made **prior** to the date of the exam or assignment. Unless contacted in advance (apart from emergencies), make-ups will not be granted.

Academic Honesty:

You are expected to adhere to the UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policies and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi. *Unless explicitly stated, artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as ChatGPT, must not be used to generate responses for student assignments.* If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism, please consult Professor Nicholson.

Prohibition on Recording Classes:

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course including lectures and discussion sections. I require that you seek my permission if you want to make audio and/or video recordings of any portion of class. If you do not have

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permission (or an accommodation from DRC), do not take photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings of any person in this class without their express permission. Further, do not take or share audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions. Violation of this policy will result in you receiving 0% for class participation, and, depending on the severity of the violation, may result in you receiving a grade of "F" in the class.

Preferred Names and Pronouns:

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. We are eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that we can make appropriate changes to records.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu/>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Unit One: Voting Behavior

8/17 **Introduction**

8/22 & 24 **Polling & Survey Methods**

- Hillygus, Sunshine D. 2012. "The Practice of Survey Research: Changes and Challenges." In *New Directions in Public Opinion*, Editor Adam Berinsky, New York: Routledge.
- Weisberg, Herbert, Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen. 1996. Chapter 4: Questionnaire Construction, *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*, 3rd edition

8/29 & 31 **Participation & Turnout**

- Aldrich, chp. 4
- Wayne pp. 47-54, 247-250

9/5 & 7 **Public Opinion, Ideology, & Political Sophistication**

- Simas, Elizabeth N. In *Defense of Ideology: Reexamining the Role of Ideology in the American Electorate*, New York: Cambridge, pp. 1-24

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- 9/12 & 14 **Party Identification and Partisan Change**
- Aldrich, Chapter 6
 - Wayne, pp. 54-63
 - Abramowitz, Alan I and Webster, Steven. 2016. "The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections in the 21st Century" *Electoral Studies*.
- 9/19 & 21 **Spatial and Party Models of Voting**
- Adams, James, Samuel Merrill III, and Roi Zur. 2020. "The Spatial-Voting Model". In *The Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science & International Relations*, Luigi Curini and Robert J. Franzese, Jr., editors. London: Sage Publications.
 - Aldrich, Chapter 6
 - Wayne pp. 214-217
- 9/26 & 28 **Issue and Performance Voting**
- Aldrich, Chapters 7 & 8
 - Wayne pp. 214-224
- 10/3 & 5 **The Emotional and Intuitive Roots of Voting**
- Mintz, Alex, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Carly Wayne. *Feeling Politics: How Emotions Impact Attitudes and Behavior*, 109-136.
 - TBA
- 10/ 10 **Exam #1**
- Unit Two: Campaigns & Elections**
- 10/12 **Intro to Campaigns**
- Sides, John and Jake Haselswerdt. 2012. "Campaigns and Elections." In *New Directions in Public Opinion*, Editor Adam Berinsky, New York: Routledge.
 - Wayne, chp. 1?
- 10/ 17 & 19 **Parties, Interest Groups & Money in Elections**
- Wayne, chapter 2 & 4
- 10/ 24 & 26 **Mass Media in Elections**
- Wayne, chapter 8
- 10/31 & 11/2 **Nomination Campaigns**
- Aldrich, chapter 1
 - Wayne, chapter 5 & 6, 237-240
- 11/7 & 9 **Presidential Campaigns**
- Aldrich, chapter 2 & 3
 - Wayne, chapter 7

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- 11/14 & 16 **Congressional Elections**
Aldrich, chapters 9-11
• **Paper due 11/16**
- 11/21 & 23 **No Classes-Thanksgiving Week**
- 11/28 Make-up day
- 11/30 **Final Exam**