

Political Science 4805
AMERICAN ELECTORAL DEVELOPMENT
Fall 2025 (63789)
Baldwin 301
MWF 3:00-3:50 p.m.

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Course Overview

This upper-level course is intended as a broad survey of the literature on American electoral development. The central focus of the course will examine how political actors and elites have sought to both influence and manipulate election outcomes over the course of the nation's history. As such, this course fits in the mold of an "applied history" perspective as we seek to learn from the past in addressing issues that arise in the modern era. Throughout the course, we will focus on the founding era, the origins and evolution of political parties, antebellum politics and elections, balloting and voting, electoral systems and reform, presidential and congressional elections in the postbellum era, as well as trust in elections. By the end of the course, you should have a better understanding of research on American electoral development as well as how it relates to an applied history framework.

Required Texts

DeRose, Chris. 2015. *Founding Rivals: Madison v. Monroe, The Bill of Rights, and the Election that Saved a Nation*. Regnery History. ISBN: 978-1621573050

Engstrom, Erik and Samuel Kernell. 2016. *Party Ballots, Reform, and the Transformation of America's Electoral System*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-1107686786

Holt, Michael. 2008. *By One Vote: The Disputed Presidential Election of 1876 (American Presidential Elections)*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. ISBN: 978-0700617876

Course Materials

The readings for the course will be drawn from the list of books above, in addition to scholarly articles each week. Required books are available for purchase from the usual sources or may be checked out from the library. Unless otherwise indicated, assigned articles can be downloaded from www.jstor.org or from Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>). Please keep in mind that assigned readings, or the course schedule may be altered as needed at the discretion of the instructor.

General Expectations

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You are expected to attend class regularly, to show up on time, and be prepared to participate in discussions. You are responsible for all material in the readings and lectures, even if you are unable to attend class. It is your responsibility to remain aware of specific deadlines or dates posted on the syllabus and to be sure that assignments are completed on time.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

1. Class Participation (20%)
2. Final Paper (20%)
3. Exam One (20%)
4. Exam Two (20%)
5. Final Exam (20%)

In terms of final grades in light of the +/- grading system, an A will be given to anyone receiving 94 or more points, an A- to those receiving 90-93 points, a B+ to those receiving 87-89 points, a B to those receiving 83-86 points, a B- to those receiving 80-82 points, a C+ to those receiving 77-79 points, a C to those receiving 73-76 points, a C- to those receiving 70-72 points, a D to those receiving 60 to 69 points, and an F to anyone receiving fewer than 60 points in the course.

Class Participation

Your grade in this area will be based on the quality of your classroom participation (see rubric below). Students are expected to participate through asking questions and answering inquiries raised in class. Keep in mind that it is difficult to participate without being physically present. To adequately prepare for class, all assigned readings should be completed by the dates indicated on the course schedule. Not all assigned readings may be discussed in class; nonetheless you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with them.

Participation Rubric

A – Student attends almost every class while consistently demonstrating that he or she has completed and understands the assigned readings by participating in class discussion meaningfully.

B – Student only attends most class meetings while completing all readings and actively participating in a meaningful way.

C – Student attends almost every class but regularly fails to demonstrate completion of readings or participate in any meaningful way.

D – Student only attends most class meetings and regularly fails to demonstrate completion of readings or participate in any meaningful way.

F – Student regularly arrives late or misses class entirely, does not complete assigned readings, does not engage in class discussion meaningfully, or is disruptive or disrespectful.

Active Learning Assignments

Several times throughout the course, we will engage in a variety of active learning exercises. This will typically involve breaking the class up into smaller groups where each group will discuss a specific issue, question, or topic related to some facet of elections. Each group may then be asked to make a very brief presentation during the last part of class or turn in a written assignment during the next class meeting. Half of your participation grade will be assessed based on your active involvement in these activities. More details will be provided early in the semester.

Final Paper

Everyone will be required to submit a final paper near the end of the semester (more details to follow in the coming weeks). These papers should be approximately 4-5 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. Final papers will be due on **November 24, 2025**. *Your final grade on the project will be penalized if there are grammatical or spelling errors in the completed paper.*

Exams

There will be three exams in this course. Exams are closed book and will include a mix of identification, short answer, and/or essay questions. The final exam is cumulative and will include material covered in the class lectures and the assigned reading. *A blue or green book will be required for each exam.*

Instructor Availability

If you would like to speak with me outside of class, feel free to stop by my office during scheduled office hours. Occasionally I have meetings during the day and may be unavailable. To ensure that I am in my office on a given day, email me (carson@uga.edu) ahead of time to set up a specific time to meet.

Incompletes and Make-Up Policy

A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., a university-sanctioned activity, religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be accepted **prior** to the exam when feasible to allow a make-up to be scheduled. As a rule, late assignments will not be accepted unless approval is obtained in advance from the instructor.

Miscellaneous

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. No “extra credit” will be given under any circumstances. Final grades may only be changed in the event of a clerical error (e.g., points summed incorrectly). The syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Accommodations and Academic Honesty

Students that require accommodation should notify me and the Office for Disability Services as soon as possible so appropriate arrangements can be made. All information and documentation are considered confidential. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” More detailed information can be found at: <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>.

AI Usage in Class

We are now living in an age where artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT are widely accessible and increasingly used in academic work. I do not want to discourage you from exploring and learning with these tools in this class. However, you need to be smart and thoughtful about how you use them. AI should be treated as a supplement to—not a replacement for—your own critical thinking, writing, and analysis. You also need to document any AI source that you do use just like any other reference material.

Keep in mind that AI-generated content can sometimes be incorrect, misleading, or lacking in nuance. Submitting work that relies entirely on these tools without proper understanding, citation, or originality may violate academic integrity policies like those highlighted above. You are responsible for the work you turn in, regardless of how you created it. If you choose to use AI to brainstorm ideas, clarify concepts, or get feedback on drafts, do so in a way that supports your learning, not short-circuits it.

If you have questions about what constitutes appropriate use of AI in this course, please do not hesitate to ask me. I am happy to help you navigate this evolving landscape responsibly and effectively.

Policy on Recording Lectures

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. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

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 or crisis support: (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) (<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.

Course Schedule (Assigned readings are to be completed by the dates listed below)

8/13	Introduction
8/15	What is Applied History?
	The Founding
8/18	DeRose, <i>Founding Rivals</i> (pgs. ix-87)
8/20	DeRose, <i>Founding Rivals</i> (pgs. 89-185)
8/22	No Class, Political Science Faculty Meeting
8/25	DeRose, <i>Founding Rivals</i> (pgs. 187-274)
	Political Parties
8/27	Anzia, Sarah F. 2012. "Partisan Power Play: The Origins of Local Election Timing as an American Political Institution." <i>Studies in American Political Development</i> 26(April): 24-49.
8/29	Active Learning Activity

9/1 *No Class, Labor Day*

Antebellum Politics and Elections

9/3 Laracey, Mel. 2008. "The Presidential Newspaper as an Engine of Early American Political Development: The Case of Thomas Jefferson and the Election of 1800." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 11(1): 7-46.

9/5 Bianco, William T., David B. Spence, and John D. Wilkerson. 1996. "The Electoral Connection in the Early Congress: The Case of the Compensation Act of 1816." *American Journal of Political Science* 40(February): 145-171.

9/8 Jenkins, Jeffery A. and Brian R. Sala. 1998. "The Spatial Theory of Voting and the Presidential Election of 1824." *American Journal of Political Science* 42(October): 1157-1179.

9/10 Carson, Jamie L. and Erik J. Engstrom. 2005. "Assessing the Electoral Connection: Evidence from the Early United States." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(October): 746-757.

9/12 Carson, Jamie and M. V. Hood, III. 2014. "Candidates, Competition, and the Partisan Press: Congressional Elections in the Early Antebellum Era." *American Politics Research* 42(5): 760-783.

9/15 Engstrom, Erik, Jesse Hammond, and John Scott. 2013. "Capitol Mobility: Madisonian Representation and the Location and Relocation of Capitals in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 107(May): 225-240.

9/17 **Exam One**

Balloting and Voting

9/19 Katz, Jonathan N. and Brian R. Sala. 1996. "Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection." *American Political Science Review* 90(March): 21-33.

9/22 Bensel, Richard. 2003. "The American Ballot Box: Law, Identity, and the Polling Place in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." *Studies in American Political Development* 17(April): 1-27.

9/24 Engstrom, Erik J. 2012. "The Rise and Decline of Turnout in Congressional Elections: Electoral Institutions, Competition, and Strategic Mobilization." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(April): 373-386.

9/26 Active Learning Activity

9/29 Engstrom and Kernell, *Party Ballots, Reform, and the Transformation of America's Electoral System* (pgs. 1-57)

10/1 Engstrom and Kernell, *Party Ballots, Reform, and the Transformation of America's Electoral System* (pgs. 58-134)

10/3 Engstrom and Kernell, *Party Ballots, Reform, and the Transformation of America's Electoral System* (pgs. 135-199)

National Authority and the State

- 10/6 Kernell, Samuel and Michael P. McDonald. 1999. "Congress and America's Political Development: The Transformation of the Post Office from Patronage to Service." *American Journal of Political Science* 43(July): 792-811.
- 10/8 Theriault, Sean M. 2003. "Patronage, the Pendleton Act, and the Power of the People." *Journal of Politics* 65(February): 50-68.
- 10/10 Rogowski, Jon C. 2016. "Presidential Influence in an Era of Congressional Dominance." *American Political Science Review* 110(2): 325-341.
- 10/13 Active Learning Activity

Postbellum Politics and Elections

- 10/15 Jenkins, Jeffery A. 2004. "Partisanship and Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives, 1789-2002." *Studies in American Political Development* 18(Fall): 112-135.
- 10/17 Carson, Jamie and Jeffery Jenkins. 2011. "Examining the Electoral Connection Across Time." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14: 25-46.
- 10/20 Schiller, Wendy, Charles Stewart, and Benjamin Xiong. 2013. "U.S. Senate Elections Before the 17th Amendment: Political Party Cohesion and Conflict 1871-1913." *Journal of Politics* 75(July): 835-847.
- 10/22 Carson, Jamie and Joel Sievert. 2017. "Congressional Candidates in the Era of Party Ballots." *Journal of Politics* 79(2): 534-545.
- 10/24 Engstrom, Erik J. 2006. "Stacking the States, Stacking the House: The Partisan Consequences of Congressional Redistricting in the 19th Century." *American Political Science Review* 100(3): 419-427.

Exam Two

- 10/29 Active Learning Activity
- 10/31 No Class, Fall Break

Presidential Elections

- 11/3 Lynch, G. Patrick. 1999. "Presidential Elections and the Economy 1872 to 1966: The Times They Are a 'Changin' or the Song Remains the Same?" *Political Research Quarterly* 52(4): 825-844.
- 11/5 Mayhew, David R. 2008. "Incumbency Advantage in U.S. Presidential Elections: The Historical Record." *Political Science Quarterly* 123(2): 201-228.
- 11/7 Ware, Alan. 2016. "Donald Trump's Hijacking of the Republican Party in Historical Perspective." *The Political Quarterly* 87(3): 406-414.
- 11/10 Taylor, Mark Zachary. 2021. "The Historical Presidency: The Gilded Age Presidents and the Economy." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 51(4): 860-883.

11/12 Active Learning Activity

11/14 Holt, *By One Vote* (pgs. 1-66)

11/17 Holt, *By One Vote* (pgs. 67-151)

11/19 Holt, *By One Vote* (pgs. 152-248)

Confidence and Trust in Elections

11/21 Pettigrew, Stephen. 2017. "The Racial Gap in Wait Times: Why Minority Precincts are Underserved by Local Election Officials." *Political Science Quarterly* 132(3): 527-547.

11/24 Enders, Adam M., Joseph E. Uscinski, Casey A. Klofstad, Kamal Premaratne, Michelle I. Seelig, Stefan Wuchty, Manohar N. Murthi, and John Funchion. 2021. "The 2020 Presidential Election and Beliefs about Fraud: Continuity or Change?" *Electoral Studies* 72: 102366.

***Final Papers Due**

11/26 No Class, Thanksgiving Break

11/28 No Class, Thanksgiving Break

12/1 Stewart, Charles III. 2022. "Trust in Elections." *Daedalus* 151(4): 234-253.

12/2 Active Learning Activity

12/3 No Class, Reading Day

12/5 **Final Examination**, 3:30-6:30 p.m.