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Seminar: American Political Behavior  
(Spring 2013)

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Office Hours: TR 10:00-11:30

Note: Some of the reading assignments may be subject to change.

This seminar is designed with two purposes in mind. First, it introduces students to a number of the important substantive and methodological issues in the study of American political behavior. Second, the course provides students with an opportunity to explore these issues in greater depth in the form of a research paper.

Although it is impossible to organize a seminar so that it covers all potential topics, the assigned readings should provide a solid basis for understanding the major currents of research in American political behavior. Of course, this only works if the students keep up with the readings. Therefore, it is expected that students in this seminar will read the assigned readings before each class meeting and come to class prepared to discuss them. A word of warning is in order here: quantity of discussion is not nearly as important as quality of discussion.

I see my role as that of discussion facilitator. To the extent possible, this seminar will follow the “conference-system” model, whereby students read the assigned materials and come to class prepared to discuss them. My job is to encourage the students to speak up, whether to test their ideas, offer criticisms or insights, or to ask questions that might help themselves and others gain a better understanding of the material. I will try to keep our discussion as open and unstructured as possible while still staying on message. Students can make valuable contributions by asking themselves the following (and other) questions as they prepare for class. What did I learn? What are the important areas of agreement and disagreement among the assigned readings? Were there important methodological or conceptual problems? Was there anything that impressed me as particularly clever or innovative? What are some interesting related avenues of research that I could explore? Students should consider these questions seriously prior to class.

In addition to being prepared for discussion, students must submit “mini” research papers for ten of the thirteen topics. These papers must be brief (no more than three pages), data-based analyses of topics related to the week’s readings. I encourage students to use the American National Election Study (NES), the National Annenberg Election Study (NAES), or the General Social Survey (GSS) as their data sources for these papers. Of course, any number of other data sources are available and may suit your needs better than those I’ve mentioned. This requirement serves two important functions. First, it forces students to start working with data sources that are widely used by scholars of political behavior. Second, it forces them to think more clearly about research questions that flow from the weekly readings. These mini papers are due at the end of every class period. You should bring electronic versions of tables or graphs
and be prepared to discuss your findings in class. I cannot emphasize enough how important I think this part of the class is.

A modest research paper is also required for this class. You should think of this paper as an opportunity to explore a topic of interest to you in greater detail. Given the other requirements of this course, however, I am limiting this paper to something like a research update, a replication, a research note, or a pilot study. You should begin thinking about potential topics right away. A number of different papers written for this seminar have found their way into print over the years, so I encourage you to think about papers you’d like to develop into a potential publication.

There will also be a final exam at the end of the semester.

Your course grade will be determined in the following manner.

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Many of the assigned readings are articles or book chapters that have been put on reserve at the library or can be accessed via JSTOR, Web of Science, or Worldwide Abstracts of Political Science (all available through the UWM Library). In addition, the following books should be available for purchase at the UWM Bookstore.

**Books**


**SCHEDULE**

*All readings are available online via the e-reserve system, links from Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, or via the course D2L site.*

1/24 **First Meeting, no assigned readings.**

1/31 **Measurement Issues**


**Recommended:**


**2/7 Cognition and Emotions**


**Recommended:**

Associates.


2/14 Attitude Formation


Fischle, Mark. 2000, "Mass Response to the Lewinsky Scandal: Motivated Reasoning or Bayesian Updating?", *Political Psychology*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 135-135


**Recommended:**


2/21 Political Knowledge (I will be out of town this week. We will attempt an electronic class “meeting.”)


**Recommended:**


2/28 Political Tolerance


Recommended:


3/7 Political Trust


Recommended:


**3/14 Race, Sex, Attitudes, and Behavior**


**Recommended:**


3/28 Political Participation


**Recommended:**


Turnout." The American Political Science Review 104 (2): 268-288


McClurg, Scott D. 2006. The electoral relevance of political talk: Examining disagreement and expertise effects in social networks on political participation. American Journal of Political Science 50: 737-754

4/4 Polarization?


Recommended:


4/11 Partisanship: Part I (Need to reschedule)


**Recommended:**
(See next week)

**4/18 Partisanship: Part II**


**Recommended:**

Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Shickler. Partisan Hearts and Minds. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004


**4/25 Elections: Issues**


**Recommended:**


**5/2 Elections: Campaigns**


**Recommended:**


**5/9 Elections: Congress**


**Recommended:**


