

# L32 Pol Sci 4861 SEMINAR ON AMERICAN ELECTIONS AND VOTING\*

M 2:30 to 5:30PM in Eads 205

**Professor** Andrew Reeves

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Office hours: Tuesdays 10 to 11:30am and by appointment. Sign up at

<http://andrewreeves.org/office-hours>.

Course website available through <http://bb.wustl.edu/>

## Introduction

This seminar is a study of public opinion and the aggregation of public opinion through elections. We primarily focus on the U.S. and occasionally study other countries. Discussion topics include: the nature of voter decision-making, the factors that influence political behavior, and the effects of elections on political outcomes.

By the end of the seminar, you should have an understanding of the workings of democracy, elections, and public opinion. One thematic question is the extent to which voters are capable of fulfilling their democratic obligations. Can they make the ‘right’ decision at the ballot box? We examine several arguments that voters hold politicians accountable for things well-beyond human control such as shark attacks. A second question is the relationship between institutional design of elections and the effects on policy. For example, we consider whether the rates of executions increase in gubernatorial elections years.

The culmination of the course is a research paper of your choosing. We will work together throughout the semester to develop a research question and a strategy to answer it.

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\*This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class. Students who miss class are responsible for consulting the latest version of the syllabus to learn of any changes. It was last updated Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 at 13:59.

## Requirements

**Participation. 15%** This is a reading and writing intensive seminar. You are required to do all of the reading and come to seminar ready to discuss. I will take attendance at each meeting. If you cannot attend the seminar, then you should contact me. More than one absence may adversely affect your final grade.

**Short papers. 30%** For selected weeks (which I will assign you) of the semester, you are responsible for writing a 3 to 5 page paper that analyzes the readings assigned for the week. This paper should include a brief summary of the readings and focus on analysis. This analysis could include weaknesses of the argument; methodological problems with how concepts are measured; or, ideas to further expand the research, among other critiques. It is not necessary to critique the statistical methodology of an article, although you may do so. There will be three to five short papers assigned throughout the semester. Further instructions and dates of assignments are forthcoming. **The papers are due by 5PM on the day before class.** They should be emailed to the entire class at TBD.

**Survey Experiment Proposal. 10%** A five to seven page proposal of a survey experiment is due by midnight **February 16**. This proposal will outline a relevant question in the literature and then propose a survey experiment. I will provide additional details in class, and I will meet with you individually to discuss paper topics.

**Contribution to article. 20%** Each student will be assigned to complete a first draft of one section of the paper. These sections include the introduction, literature review, theoretical orientation, research design, results, and conclusion. You will prepare a draft of this write up by April 7 and will receive feedback from me and a student in the class. You should incorporate those comments and hand in a new draft on April 14.

**Proposed revisions. 25%** Taking your completed contributions, we will combine the sections into a full draft of the paper. You will then write a seven to ten page critique of the article. These critiques will include the limitations of the research designs and ways to improve it going forward.

## A Recap of Assignments

Requirement	Due	% of Grade
Class participation	throughout	15%
Short papers	throughout	30%
Survey Experiment Proposal	Feb 17	10%
Contribution to the article	Mar 7 (draft for peer-review); Apr 14	20%
Proposed revisions	Apr 21 (draft for peer-review); Apr 25	25%

## Grading Scale

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
≥ 94	A	≥ 83	B	≥ 73	C	≥ 63	D
≥ 90	A–	≥ 80	B–	≥ 70	C–	≥ 60	D–
≥ 87	B+	≥ 77	C+	≥ 67	D+	< 60	Fail

## Course Policies

**Academic Integrity.** Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be completed individually. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Students should see me or the teaching assistant if he or she has the slightest question about or concern of potentially committing this most horrendous academic offense. Students should adhere to all ethical codes set forth by Washington University. Please carefully review the College of Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code at <http://wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html>. Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the academic integrity committee, and students found guilty will receive a failing grade in the course.

**Late work.** Work is considered late if it is not turned in when collected in class or, in other cases, immediately after the established deadline.

Late work is accepted but penalized. Papers received within 12 hours after the deadline will be deducted half a letter grade (a B becomes a B–). Papers received between 12 hours and 24 hours after the deadline will be penalized a full letter grade, and so on.

**Extensions.** Extensions are offered under the same terms as late work (see above).

**Religious observances.** If any conflicts arise between religious observances and a class assignment, notify at least two weeks beforehand and I will work with you to find an alternate means to complete the assignment.

**Accommodations.** If you are qualified for learning, testing, or access accommodations, inform me during the first week of class. For further information see <http://cornerstone.wustl.edu/DisabilityResources.aspx>.

## Required Texts

Larry M. Bartels. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Bill Bishop. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*. Mariner Books, New York.

Mark Halperin and John Heilemann. 2013. *Double Down*. The Penguin Press, New York.

V.O. Key Jr. 1984. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

## Course Schedule

What follows is a schedule for the course detailing which topics and readings will be discussed on what dates. All readings should be completed by class on the date listed.

I reserve the right to make any and all changes to this schedule and I will provide you with ample notification if do so.

1. January 13: Overview and Introduction
2. January 20: Martin Luther King holiday: No Class.
3. January 27: Voter Competence: Are the masses asses?
  - Anthony Downs. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Harper & Row, New York. Chapters 11 and 12.
  - Benjamin Page and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. University Of Chicago Press, Chicago. Chapters 1 and 2.
  - Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. Yale University Press, New Haven. Chapters 2 and 4.
4. February 3: Economic Voting: It's the economy stupid.
  - Donald R. Kinder and D. Roderick Kiewiet. 1981. "Sociotropic Politics: The American Case." *British Journal of Political Science* 11(2):129–161.
  - Morris Fiorina, Samuel Abrams, and Jeremy Pope. 2003. "The 2000 US Presidential Election: Can Retrospective Voting Be Saved?." *British Journal of Political Science* 33(02):163–187.
  - Michael Ebeid and Jonathan Rodden. 2006. "Economic Geography and Economic Voting: Evidence from the US States." *British Journal of Political Science* 36(3):527–547.
5. February 10: Non-economic Voting: Do shark attacks, bad weather, and football victories matter for politics?
  - Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels. 2004. "Blind Retrospection: Electoral Responses to Drought, Flu, and Shark Attacks." Typescript.
  - John T. Gasper and Andrew Reeves. 2011. "Make it Rain? Retrospection and the Attentive Electorate in the Context of Natural Disasters." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2):340–355.

- Andrew J. Healy, Neil Malhotra, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo. 2010. “Irrelevant events affect voters’ evaluations of government performance.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107(29):12804–12809.

6. February 17: Experiments: Testing theories of voting and public opinion.

In groups of two students will trade and critique survey experiments and then discuss with entire class.

- James N. Druckman and Arthur Lupia. 2012. “Experimenting with Politics.” *Science* 335(6073):1177–1179.
- James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2011. “Experiments: An Introduction to Core Concepts” in *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, eds. James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski and Arthur Lupia. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Dino P. Christenson and David M. Glick. 2013. “Crowdsourcing Panel Studies and Real-Time Experiment in MTurk.” *The Political Methodologist* 20(2):27–31.
- Sasha Issenberg. 2010. “Nudge the Vote.” *New York Times* Oct 29.

7. February 24: Writing Surveys.

We will finalize our survey and we will submit it to the IRB.

- Adam J. Berinsky, Gregory A. Huber, and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. “Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk.” *Political Analysis* 20(3):351–368.
- Gregory A. Huber, Seth J. Hill, and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. “Sources of Bias in Retrospective Decision Making: Experimental Evidence on Voters’ Limitations in Controlling Incumbents.” *American Political Science Review* 106(4):720–741.

8. March 3: Political Geography

- Bill Bishop. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*. Mariner Books, New York.
- Daniel J. Hopkins. 2013. “Misplaced: The Limits of Contextual Influence on Americans’ Political Attitudes.” (Typescript).

9. March 10: Spring Break: No Class

10. March 17: Individual meetings.

11. March 24: Political Parties and Elections

- V.O. Key Jr. 1984. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville. Chapters 1, In Part 1: Chapters 6, 13, 14, and two more of your choosing; Part 5.

12. March 31: Presidential Campaigns: The Sound and the Fury

- Mark Halperin and John Heilemann. 2013. *Double Down*. The Penguin Press, New York. Selected chapters.

- John Sides and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*. Princeton University Press, Princeton. Selected chapters.
13. April 7: Political Business Cycles: Timing is everything
- Larry M. Bartels. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton University Press, Princeton. Chapters 1,2, and 4.
  - Jeffrey D Kubik and John R Moran. 2003. “Lethal Elections: Gubernatorial Politics and the Timing of Executions.” *The Journal of Law and Economics* 441–25.
14. April 14: The Policy Consequences of Elections
- Larry M. Bartels. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton University Press, Princeton. Remaining chapters.
15. April 21: Discussion of Critiques of Paper