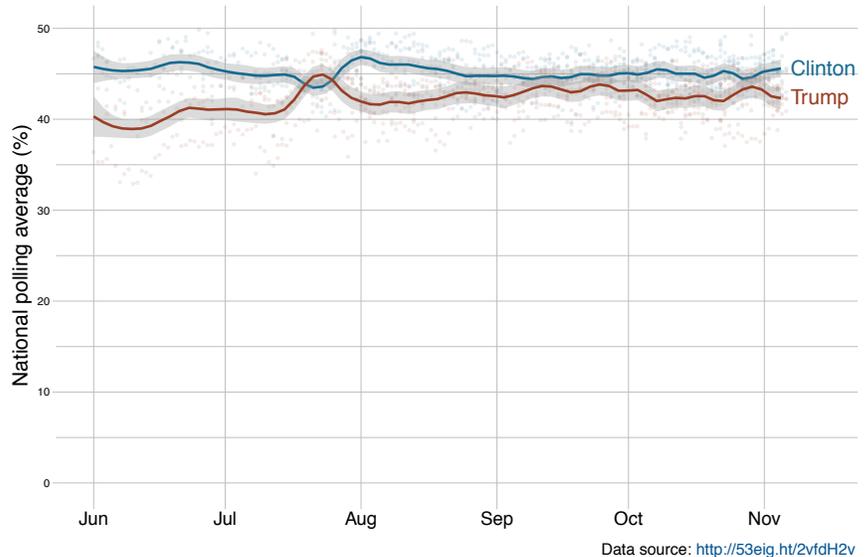


POSC 324: VOTING & ELECTIONS

FALL 2017
MWF 2.30-3.20
GORE 315

“Whatever your feelings about Trump (excitement, vindication, horror, nausea...), his election is a reminder of the unpredictability of democracy.”

–Michelle Cottle, The Atlantic,
November 22, 2016



While Cottle is right that elections provoke intense emotions, she’s wrong that this makes them unpredictable. In this course, we’ll unpack why voters make the decisions they do, why elections result in the winners and losers they do, and how campaigns spend their time and money as a consequence.

We’ll look beyond the media portrayal of fickle voters emotionally siding with a candidate at the last minute and of elections as hinging on attack ads and campaign gaffes. Instead, we’ll engage with classic academic theories of voting, and analyze empirical evidence from recent presidential and congressional elections, to understand in a more rigorous way why elections in the U.S. turn out the way they do.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Prof. Phil Jones // pejones@udel.edu // www.pejones.org
Office hours: MWF 9.30-10.30 // Smith 302

WHAT YOU’LL GET FROM THIS COURSE

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

1. Understand, explain, and compare academic theories of voter behavior and election outcomes in the United States.

2. Analyze data from recent presidential and congressional elections to evaluate these theories.

3. Critically assess and reformulate popular/media accounts of voter behavior and election outcomes.

4. Synthesize course material to create an effective strategy, message, and TV commercial for a presidential campaign.

HOW YOUR WORK WILL BE ASSESSED

Your proficiency at the course learning outcomes will be assessed in various ways in the course. These will be weighted in your final grade as follows:

Exam #1	25%	More details about these assignments will be given in class and on Canvas. Final letter grades will be assigned using the following cutoff points: A 93 B+ 87 C+ 77 D+ 67 A- 90 B 83 C 73 D 63 B- 80 C- 70 D- 60
Exam #2	25%	
Collaborative exercises (CEs)	20%	
Campaigning for President simulation	20%	
Class participation	5%	
Reading quizzes	5%	

For the CEs, you will work in assigned groups to analyze empirical evidence. You will have the option of submitting a single response as a group (and receiving a single grade) or working together and then submitting individual responses (and receiving individual grades). Your lowest CE score and your lowest reading quiz score will be dropped from your grade at the end of the semester.

ACTIVE LEARNING AND CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Research shows that people learn better when classes are “active” rather than passive. Our classes will emphasize interactive discussions and group problem-solving. I expect everyone to engage with, and contribute to, the learning process. To facilitate this, let me make four expectations very clear:

1. I expect everyone to attend every meeting, having carefully read and thought about the assigned readings. Being present and prepared to learn is a minimum requirement for passing the course.
2. I expect you to arrive on time and to spend all of our class time in the room. Coming in late, or leaving during the class for bathroom or snack breaks, distracts me and your classmates from learning. It also means we miss an opportunity to learn from you while you’re absent.
3. To ensure everyone is fully present, this class is an **electronics-free zone**. All laptops, tablets, and cellphones must be turned off and put away in regular class sessions, although you are free to use them during the Collaborative Exercises and Campaigning for President simulation. [Students who have a documented reason for laptop use should talk to me about accommodating your needs.]
4. If you are encountering difficulties in the class, come meet with me. My office hours are open door, first come first served. Please don’t wait; I will always try my best to help students who reach out.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Your participation is critical, both for your own learning and for others’ in the class. For each of our regular class sessions, you will be scored on the following scale:

2	-----	Present and contributing to discussion
1	-----	Present but not contributing to discussion
0	-----	Not present // Not fully present (late, using cell phone/laptop, etc)

Excused absences (see below) are treated as NAs. I will periodically update you on your scores; at the end of the semester, your average will be converted into a percentage of the highest score possible.

ABSENCES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

UD has a clear policy on excused absences — see the Provost's statement at <http://facultyhandbook.udel.edu/handbook/3113-student-class-attendance-and-excused-absences>. If you are unable to attend an exam or submit an assignment for an excusable reason, you must:

1. Contact me before that class begins to let me know of your absence.
2. Contact the Dean's Office to document the reason for your absence. They will then send a letter of verification to all your professors, saving you explaining the situation repeatedly, etc.

I expect you to complete assignments on time and in full. If you fail to do so, I will still accept your work. However, it will be subject to a 10% deduction for each calendar day it is overdue (beginning on the day it is due). Missed assignments result in a score of zero.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty. You should familiarize yourself with UD's student Code of Conduct, available at: <http://www.udel.edu/stuguide/16-17/code.html>. Without exception, any academic dishonesty will automatically result in a failing grade for the entire course and an official referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities are welcome in this class. If you think that you may need an accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) as soon as possible and we will work with them to meet your needs. See: www.udel.edu/DSS

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

The schedule for this course is not set in stone, although it is very rare that I make changes during the semester, and never to assignment/exam dates except in emergency situations. You can expect any changes to be announced with adequate notice in class and over email via Canvas. The exams and collaborative exercise dates are all clearly **highlighted** in the schedule that follows; you will want to make good note of their dates now.

You should read each of the assigned readings *before* the class date they are listed under. You will have noticed there is no textbook for this course. That does not mean you should come to class empty-handed! I expect you to bring hard copies of the readings and/or *detailed* notes to aid in discussion.

Introduction to the course

8/30 Read: "What last year's students want you to know" and the syllabus.

8/30 Complete Qualtrics survey by 9am

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING VOTERS' CHOICES

Voter knowledge and decision-making

9/1 Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper. [Extracts from "The basic logic of voting" and "The process of becoming informed"]

Somin, I. (2013). *Democracy and political ignorance: Why smaller government is smarter*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press. [Extracts from Ch1, "The extent of political ignorance"]

9/6 Popkin, S.L. (1995). Information shortcuts and the reasoning voter. In B. Grofman (Ed.), *Information, participation and choice: An economic theory of democracy in perspective*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. [Extract]

9/8 Strickland, A.A., Taber, C.S., & Lodge, M. (2011). Motivated reasoning and public opinion. *Journal of health politics, policy and law*, 36(6), 935-944.

Turnout and the decision to vote

9/11- Barry, B. (1970). Political participation as rational action. In *Sociologists, economists, and democracy*. London, UK: MacMillan. [Extract]

9/13 Verba, S., Schlozman, K.L., & Brady, H.E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [Extracts]

How voters choose I: Ideology and spatial voting

9/15 Re-read your notes from 9/1 on Downs' logic of voting.

Evans, J. (2003). *Voters and voting: An introduction*. London, UK: Sage. ["Rational choice theories of voting"]

9/18 CE#1

How voters choose II: Party identification

9/20 Campbell, A., Converse, P.E., Miller, W.E., & Stokes, D.E. (1960). *The American voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ["The impact of party identification"]

9/22 CE#2

9/25 Abramowitz, A.I., & Webster, S. (2015). "The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of U.S. elections in the 21st century". *Electoral Studies* 41: 12-22. [Extracts]

How voters choose III: Retrospective voting

9/27 Fiorina, M.P. (1981). *Retrospective voting in American national elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. ["Theories of retrospective voting"]

Abramson, P.R., Aldrich, J.H., Gomez, B.T., & Rohde, D.W. (2015). In *Change and continuity in the 2012 elections*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. ["Presidential performance and candidate choice"]

9/29 CE#3

How voters choose IV: Social group identities

10/3 Berelson, B.R., Lazarsfeld, P.F., & McPhee, W.N. (1954). *Voting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Extracts from "Social differentiation" and "Social process"]

10/4 CE#4

10/6 Tesler, M. (2016). "The education gap among whites this year wasn't about education. It was about race"; "How racially resentful working-class whites fled the Democratic Party — before Donald Trump"; and "Views about race mattered more in electing Trump than in electing Obama". *The Washington Post*. [Extracts]

10/9 Exam #1

PART TWO: UNDERSTANDING ELECTION OUTCOMES

Campaign effects and the fundamentals

10/11 Lazarsfeld, P.F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1948). *The People's Choice*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. ["The activation effect"; "The reinforcement effect"; and "The conversion effect"]

10/13 CE#5

10/16 Re-read your notes on retrospective voting.

Campbell, J.E. (September 22, 2016). "Seeing the forest for the trees: Presidential election forecasts and the fundamentals". *Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball*. <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/seeing-the-forest-for-the-trees-presidential-election-forecasts-and-the-fundamentals/>

Bartels, L. (January 8, 2013). "Obama toes the line". *The Monkey Cage*. themonkeycage.org/2013/01/obama-toes-the-line/

Electoral systems and competition: Why third parties (almost) never win

10/18- Baumgartner, J.C., & Francia, P.L. (2016). *Conventional wisdom and American elections:*

10/20 *Exploding myths, exploring misconceptions* (3rd ed.). New York: Rowman and Littlefield. ["End of the two-party system? The myth of the rise of third parties"]

Congressional perks and district lines: Why incumbents (almost) always win

10/23 Baumgartner, J.C., & Francia, P.L. (2016). *Conventional wisdom and American elections: Exploding myths, exploring misconceptions* (3rd ed.). New York: Rowman and Littlefield. [Ch11, "May the best man win? The misconception of competitive congressional elections"]

10/25 Streb, M. J. (2016). *Rethinking American electoral democracy* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge. [Ch7, "The redistricting process"]

10/27 CE#6

Shaping the electorate: Turnout and voting reforms

10/30 Plumer, B. (November 8, 2016). "Why more than 80 million Americans won't vote on Election Day." *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/7/13536198/election-day-americans-vote>

Lopez, G. (January 24, 2017). "The simple truth about voter fraud." *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/10/31/13478134/voter-fraud-id-2016-trump>

11/1 CE#7

Campaign finance: Where the money comes from and what it buys

11/3- Tokaji, D.P., & Strause, R.E.B. (2014). *The new soft money: Outside spending in congressional elections*. The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. [Extracts from Ch1, "A primer on federal campaign finance law"]

11/8 CE#8

11/10 Exam #2

PART THREE: UNDERSTANDING CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

Campaign strategy

11/13 Re-read your notes on spatial voting.

Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper. ["The statics and dynamics of party ideologies"]

11/15 Re-read your notes from 10/16 on "the fundamentals".

Vavreck, L. (2009). *The message matters: The economy and presidential campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Extracts]

11/17 Feltus, W.J., Goldstein, K.M., & Dallek, M. (2016). *Inside campaigns: Elections through the eyes of political professionals*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ["Political math: How campaigns matter"]

The rules of the game

11/27 Edwards, G.C. (2011). *Why the electoral college is bad for America* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. [Extract from Ch 2, "How the electoral college works"]

11/29- Campaigning for President simulation
12/8