

POSC 324: VOTING & ELECTIONS FALL 2022 SYLLABUS

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MWF 2.30-3.20, Sharp Lab 103
Student hours: [Book an appointment here.](#)

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.

The course is organized into three sections: (1) Understanding voters' choices, where we'll focus on why Americans make the decisions they do in elections; (2) Understanding election outcomes, where we'll focus on the factors that shape electoral politics outside of voters; and (3) Understanding campaign strategy, where we'll focus on how campaigns spend their time and money as a result.

What will I get from this course?

As a result of successfully completing this class, students will be able to

- Describe, explain, and compare academic theories of voter behavior and election outcomes
- Analyze data from recent congressional and presidential elections to evaluate these theories
- Communicate their own conclusions from data analysis to others
- Synthesize course material to create an effective presidential campaign strategy
- Apply course material to explain the outcomes of 2020 elections

What do I need for this course?

Good news: literally nothing but an internet connection and access to Canvas, where all readings and assignments are posted.

How will the course be organized?

The material is split into three parts as described above, with a corresponding research project due at the end of each part. More details on those nearer the time. Each week, there is a new module, which will usually follow the same structure:

- Reading assignments for each class that you must complete before class
- Short online quizzes on the reading that you must complete before class
- An in-person class every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. These classes will involve a little lecturing from me, but will mostly be spent on active learning tasks to improve our skills and understanding of the material.

How will my work be assessed?

Your final grade for the class will be calculated on the basis of your performance on:

- Reading quizzes (20% total). These are very short quizzes designed to hold you accountable for having done the reading for that class. These are open-book/open-note, meaning you can and should use your notes and the readings to answer them. Quizzes are due on Canvas before the start of class at 2.30pm. You should expect on average two quizzes a week; your two lowest scores will be dropped from this portion of the grade.
- Several collaborative exercises (20% total). These are more extensive exercises designed for you to demonstrate your skills and knowledge. These will be completed in assigned teams, with further instructions being given each week. I am well aware that group work has a negative reputation for many students, and have designed these to ameliorate many of the problems associated with such tasks. Your lowest CE score from the semester will be dropped from this portion of the grade.
- Three research projects (50% total). Each section of the course will also have a larger research project for you to demonstrate your proficiency at the course learning outcomes. These are somewhere between a research paper and a take-home exam. You will have one week to complete these projects; more detail will be given throughout the course.
- Class participation (10% total). Our class meetings will not be used just for lecturing. Instead, we will be discussing the assigned readings and working on our skills in class. Your participation in these conversations is crucial for fully understanding and applying the material.

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned according to the following standard cutoff points:

A	93	B+	87	C+	77	D+	67
A-	90	B	83	C	73	D	63
		B-	80	C-	70	D-	60

Late work policy: All assignments have due dates to help keep you accountable. I will still accept late assignments, but these are subject to a 10% deduction for each calendar day they are overdue (beginning on the day they are due).

Re-grading policy: I use rubrics and clearly defined assignments to make grading fair across the entire class. If, however, you think there has been an error in grading one of your assignments, you should do the following: (1) Wait 24 hours until after the grade was returned. (2) Submit an email to Prof. Jones explaining clearly what you see as the error. I will re-grade your assignment and let you know your new grade. Note well that your score could go down as well as up as a result of this re-grading.

Extra credit: You should not expect any opportunities for extra credit in the course. If anything changes on that front I will email the whole class with information.

Course policies

- Absences. I am committed to being flexible and making sure that you can complete the course to the best of your ability. Some absences are going to be inevitable this semester. I ask that you be pro-active and contact me ASAP. You do not need to have an official excuse, nor do you need to go into detail about the reasons for your absence: just let me know so that I can help.
- Academic honesty. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, to re-submit the same assignment for different classes, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance.
- Communication with instructors. The best way to contact me is via email, which I check during normal business hours (M-F, 9-5). You can usually expect a response within one business day. You may want to read [this general advice](#) about email; to be clear, I prefer to be addressed by undergraduates as either Prof. Jones or Dr. Jones. I do not respond to messages that are rude, unprofessional, or inappropriately personal.
- Intellectual property and course materials. All of the materials for this course are for personal use only. Personal use is defined as use by an individual student for the purpose of studying or completing course assignments. Sharing and distribution of the course materials is in violation of the copyright.
- Student hours. These are times in my schedule that I have set aside to help you with the course material. You should make use of them! [Please schedule a meeting here](#). We can meet either in person in my office (Smith 302) or via Zoom. You will be given full details when you confirm the meeting.

Course plan

The schedule for this course is not set in stone, but here's the plan. You can expect that any changes will be announced via Canvas with adequate notice.

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING VOTERS' CHOICES

Module	Dates
M1. Introduction to the course	W 8/31: Class meeting
M2. What voters know about politics	F 9/2: Class meeting
M3. How voters use information about politics	M 9/5: No meeting (Labor Day) W 9/7: Class meeting F 9/9: Class meeting
M4. How voters choose I: Downs and spatial voting	M 9/12: Class meeting W 9/14: Class meeting F 9/16: Class meeting
M5. How voters choose II: Party identification	M 9/19: Class meeting W 9/21: Class meeting F 9/23: Class meeting
M6. How voters choose III: Retrospective voting	M 9/26: Class meeting W 9/28: Class meeting F 9/30: Class meeting
M7. How voters choose IV: Social groups	M 10/3: Class meeting W 10/5: Class meeting F 10/7: Class meeting
Research Project 1: Understanding voters' choices	M 10/10: Class meeting W 10/12: Optional consultation time F 10/14: Optional consultation time

PART TWO: UNDERSTANDING ELECTION OUTCOMES

Module	Dates
M8. Election fundamentals and the campaigns	M 10/17: Class meeting W 10/19: Class meeting F 10/21: Class meeting
M9. Congressional elections	M 10/24: Class meeting W 10/26: Class meeting F 10/28: Class meeting
M10. Turnout and the right to vote	M 10/31: Class meeting W 11/2: Class meeting F 11/4: Class meeting
M11. Electoral systems and their consequences	M 11/7: Class meeting W 11/9: Class meeting F 11/11: Class meeting
Research Project 2: Understanding election outcomes	M 11/14: Class meeting W 11/16: Optional consultation time F 11/18: Optional consultation time

PART THREE: UNDERSTANDING CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

Module	Dates
M12. Campaign strategy	M 11/28: Class meeting W 11/30: Class meeting F 12/2: Class meeting
Research Project 3: Understanding campaign strategy	M 12/5: Class meeting W 12/7: Optional consultation time F 12/9: Optional consultation time
M13. Course wrap-up	M 12/12: Class meeting

Additional policies

Disclosure of sexual misconduct

If, at any time during this course, I happen to be made aware that a student may have been the victim of sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic/dating violence, or stalking), I am obligated to inform the university's Title IX Coordinator. The university needs to know information about such incidents in order to offer resources to victims and to ensure a safe campus environment for everyone. The Title IX Coordinator will decide if the incident should be examined further. If such a situation is disclosed to me in class, in a paper assignment, or in office hours, I promise to protect your privacy — I will not disclose the incident to anyone but the Title IX Coordinator. More information on sexual misconduct policies, where to get help, and how to report information, is [available online](#). UD provides 24-hour crisis assistance and victim advocacy and counseling. Contact 302-831-1001, UD Helpline 24/7/365, to get in touch with a sexual offense support advocate.

Harassment and discrimination

The University of Delaware works to promote an academic and work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. As a member of the community, your rights, resources and responsibilities are reflected in the [non-discrimination and sexual misconduct policies](#).

The University of Delaware does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, disability, religion, age, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by applicable law in its employment, educational programs and activities, admissions policies, and scholarship and loan programs as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and University policies. The University of Delaware also prohibits unlawful harassment including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

You can report any concerns to the University's Office of Equity & Inclusion, at 305 Hullahen Hall, (302) 831-8063 or you can report anonymously through UD Police (302) 831-2222 or the EthicsPoint Compliance Hotline at www1.udel.edu/compliance. You can also report any violation of UD policy on harassment, discrimination, or abuse of any person [online here](#).

Inclusion of diverse learning needs

Any student who thinks they may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact the [Office of Disability Support Services](#) (DSS) office as soon as possible. The DSS office is located at 240 Academy Street, Alison Hall Suite 130, Phone: 302-831-4643. We will work together to find accommodations for you that ensure you can get the most out of the class as possible.