

PSCI 3210A
Electoral Politics in the United States
Wednesday 8:35 – 11:25 a.m.
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Tyler Attwood
Office: B646 Loeb Building
Office Hours: 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays
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Course description

This course offers a comprehensive overview of key aspects of U.S. electoral politics, including local, state and federal elections, the power and advantage of incumbency, the two-party system in historical and current context, campaign financing and the role of money in US elections, the function of the media, and the dynamics of voter turnout. There are numerous ways in which electoral politics are distinct in the US relative to other liberal democracies: the amount of money spent, the length of campaigns, the decisive role of media and polling, the leading role of states in administering elections, the Electoral College, the prominent role of social or ‘moral’ issues in elections, and a historically-specific interplay of demographic factors, namely race, gender and class. Each of these aspects works to produce a variety of negative and positive results, and understanding the possibilities for reform figures into the course as well. The purpose of this course, then, is to explore these and other facets of electoral politics in the US to cultivate a better understanding of general trends and comparative lessons.

Course Texts

All books are available at **Haven Bookstore** (Seneca and Sunnyside)

- L. Sandy Maisel & Mark D. Brewer (eds.), *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*, **updated 5th edition**, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009
- Morris P. Fiorina, Samuel J. Abrams, & Jeremy C. Pope, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, **3rd edition**, Longman, 2010
- Allen Raymond, *How to Rig an Election: Confessions of a Republican Operative*, Simon & Schuster, **reprint edition**, 2008
- Spencer Overton, *Stealing Democracy: The New Politics of Voter Suppression*, W.W. Norton, 2007

Evaluation

➤ **Participation 15%:** The course will not be entirely lecture-driven. Instead, there will be substantial time spent in class hours discussing the material. To this end, you are required to do the reading before class and come prepared to propose questions to the group and to comment on questions offered by me or your classmates. Participation is not necessarily talking a lot in class (in fact this can sometimes lower one's mark!). Quality of comments, engagement with others, evidence of attentiveness and so forth are the indicators I use to assess this mark. Certainly attendance is required, but is not formally marked. For your consideration, I have placed a guide at the end of this outline that gives a sense of what is expected.

➤ **Co-leading a debate 15%:** Throughout the term there are four 'debates' scheduled, linked to the themes of the main readings. Each of these debates has an associated set of short readings. At the first class meeting we will allocate these debates to 4 relatively equal groups (4 or 5 students per debate). During the second half of class on those days the students responsible for co-leading the debate will briefly present the main ideas in the debate readings (making reference to the other assigned readings where appropriate). Then, the presenters will provide their collective assessment and interpretation of the contentious points, and will conclude by offering a set of discussion questions for the entire class. The audience should withhold participation and discussion until after the panel of presenters have offered these questions. The panel should strive to keep their presentation under 20 minutes. Working out the division of labour and roles is up to the group. You will be marked on the comprehensiveness, clarity and accuracy of the presentation, as well as adhering to time limits and engaging the audience (including me) in discussion. Generally speaking, each member of the team will receive the same mark, however I reserve the right to assign specific marks in exceptional circumstances (e.g., when it is clear that one member has done very little preparation, etc.).

➤ **2010 Elections Journal & Report 30%:** This is an exciting time to be taking this course! 2010 is a mid-term election year in the US, one seemingly poised to overturn the results of the 2008 election, which many had called a realignment election. In the course we want to keep on top of the events leading up to the November elections, and a major means of facilitating this will be your elections journal. This will involve keeping an eye on the elections news for a week or two before settling on a more specific focus for your project. This could be a particular race or races (1 vs. 1, or all of a state's races, etc.), a key issue (e.g., gay marriage, the economy, wars), or a dynamic (e.g., money in campaigns, the role of parties, third parties or independents). Once you settle on a more specific focus for your journaling, you will produce two journal entries per week based on your news monitoring. Source material can include all forms of credible, legitimate media, and while you can use candidates' own material, you should take it for what it is (i.e., not impartial). Each journal entry should be around 350-500 words, but there are no strict maximums (doing less than this, however, will be penalized). Use the entries not only to explain the stories, but also contribute your own thoughts and interpretations, drawing on relevant aspects of the course. Essentially, this is a kind of chronicle with editorial commentary. Your first two entries should be submitted no later than **Sept. 22nd** and you should have settled on a more specific focus by **Sept. 29th**. You are free to settle on a specific focus right away if you wish. Your last entry will be no later than **Nov. 10th** (to account for post-election reflections). The second part of this project will be to produce a final report on the race, issue or dynamic you focused on, using your journal entries as source material, and you are free to do additional research, as well. You should treat the final report as a sort of argumentative essay, the precise

point of which should develop organically out of your journaling. **The final report will be due on the last class of the term, Dec. 1st.** The 30% will be divided as follows: 20% journal, 10% report. The journal entries will be submitted on Web CT in a blog post on the discussion boards. Reading and commenting on others' journals is a form of class participation! We will discuss this assignment in more detail in class.

➤ **Final Exam 40%:** The final exam will be a take-home exam, **due no later than 5:00 pm in my office on Friday, December 17th.** It will be comprehensive, covering all course material. You may submit the exam earlier if you prefer by using the PSCI drop box and notifying me that you have done so. The format of the final exam will be essay questions designed to produce answers that synthesize key general themes from the course. The exam questions will be posted on Web CT on Wednesday, December 8th. Further details on the exam will be provided in class.

(Per early feedback guidelines, the following will be available to you by **October 27th**: one-half of your participation mark (7.5%) and a portion of your elections journal mark (10%). If you do one of the first two debates, you will also have that mark (15%) by then.)

Details regarding Term Work and Final Exam

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Due dates are noted under the description of each item below, as well as on the **Class Schedule** below.

****EMAILED OR FAXED COPIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED EVEN FOR TIME VERIFICATION!****

Assignments submitted late will be penalized 5% of the value of the assignment per day late, to a maximum of 10 days (50%), after which the assignment will receive a grade of zero. Weekends are included in the calculation of late penalties.

Extensions will not be granted except on medical grounds for which you must provide appropriate documentation. See "**Academic Accommodations**" below for additional exceptions.

Please note that you may **NOT** use the drop box to turn in assignments **on the day they are due**, though you may drop **late** papers there. If you are turning in your assignment on time, you must do so **in person, in class**.

Graded assignments will be returned within two weeks following the due date. You may also pick up your papers during office hours. If you are unable to collect any assignment during the term you may provide me a self-addressed, stamped envelope so that I can mail your work to you.

The Web CT page for the course will be used and you should make a habit of checking it frequently. The syllabus, links, readings and other important documents are posted there. There is also a discussion forum for the assignments and general course issues. You should monitor the **Announcements** tab for any last-minute changes or updates, such as class or office hour cancellations or room changes. Please note that the email function on Web CT will not be used for this course.

Course Topics and Reading Schedule

9/15: Introduction, discussion of course structure & assignments

9/22: Maisel, Chaps. 1-2

9/29: Maisel, Chaps. 3-5
Debate 1: “Was Madison Right?” (Madison, Truman, and Rauch)

10/6: Maisel, Chaps. 6-7

10/13: Maisel, Chaps. 8-9

10/20: Maisel, Chaps. 10-12
Debate 2: “The Impact of the New Media” (Nagourney, McDaniel, and Prior)

10/27: Fiorina, Chaps., 1-6

11/3: Fiorina, Chaps. 7-10 + Epilogue
Debate 3: “Red vs. Blue America: Are We Polarized?” (Fiorina and Wilson)

11/10: Raymond (first half)

11/17: Raymond (second half)

11/24: Overton (first half)
Debate 4: “Voter Fraud or Voter Suppression?” (Williams, Keisling, and Cox)

12/1: Overton (second half)

Academic Resources

If You Need Assistance With...	Refer To...	Contact Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ understanding academic rules ⌚ choosing or changing major ⌚ finding a tutor ⌚ academic planning ⌚ polishing study skills 	Student Academic Success Centre (SASC)	302 Tory Building 520-7850 www.carleton.ca/sasc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ a learning disability 	Paul Menton Centre	500 University Centre 520-6608 www.carleton.ca/pmc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ developing writing skills 	Writing Tutorial Service	229 Paterson Hall 520-6632 www.carleton.ca/wts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ peer assisted tutoring for pre-identified, notoriously difficult courses 	Peer Assisted Study Sessions	Centre for Initiatives in Education 520-2600, ext. 1523 www.carleton.ca/cie
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ polishing English conversation skills, or proof reading (International students only) 	International Student Advisory	501 University Centre 520-6600 www.carleton.ca/isa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ research assistance 	Staff at MacOdrum Library (reference services desk)	520-2735 www.library.carleton.ca

Academic Accommodations

For students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (500 University Centre) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Registered PMC students are required to contact the centre (613-520-6608) every term to ensure that the instructor receives your request for accommodation. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet with the instructor in order to discuss your needs **at least two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations**. If you require accommodation for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodation to PMC by **November 15 2010 for December examinations and March 11 2011 for April examinations**.

For Religious Observance: Students requesting accommodation for religious observances should apply in writing to their instructor for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Instructors and students may contact an Equity Services Advisor for assistance (www.carleton.ca/equity).

For Pregnancy: Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. Then, make an appointment to discuss your needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

Plagiarism: The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

Oral Examination: At the discretion of the instructor, students may be required to pass a brief oral examination on research papers and essays.

Submission and Return of Term Work: Papers must be handed directly to the instructor and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day's date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to have your assignment returned by mail. Please note that assignments sent via fax or email will not be accepted. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

Approval of final grades: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Course Requirements: Failure to write the final exam will result in a grade of ABS. FND (Failure No Deferred) is assigned when a student's performance is so poor during the term that they cannot pass the course even with 100% on the final examination. In such cases, instructors may use this notation on the Final Grade Report to indicate that a student has already failed the course due to inadequate term work and should not be permitted access to a deferral of the examination. Deferred final exams are available ONLY if the student is in good standing in the course.

Connect Email Accounts: All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via Connect. Important course and University information is also distributed via the Connect email system. It is the student's responsibility to monitor their Connect account.

Carleton Political Science Society: The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. Holding social events, debates, and panel discussions, CPSS aims to involve all political science students in the after-hours academic life at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through numerous opportunities which will complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, please email carletonpss@gmail.com, visit our website at poliscisociety.com, or come to our office in Loeb D688.

Official Course Outline: The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.

PARTICIPATION GRADE GUIDE

Grade	Attendance	Discussion	Reading
13-15	Always	<u>Excellent</u> : leads discussions; offers analysis and comments; always has ideas on theme of reading; takes care not to dominate; asks questions	Clearly has done and prepared questions on nearly all readings; intelligently uses this understanding and these questions in discussion
10-12	Almost always	<u>Very Good</u> : thoughtful comments and questions for the most part; willing, able and frequent contributor	Has done most readings; provides competent analysis of reading when prompted by others
6-9	Frequent	<u>Good</u> : has basic grasp of key concepts and occasional ideas on the main theme of the reading; arguments are sporadic and at times incomplete or poorly supported; unwilling to ask questions	Displays familiarity with most readings, but tends not to analyze them or to relate them to the course material
3-5	Occasional	<u>Somewhat Poor</u> : remarks in class marred by poor understandings of key concepts; seldom contributes effectively to discussion of the main theme; often digresses in unhelpful ways; sporadic	Actual knowledge of material is outweighed by improvised comments and remarks
0-2	Rare	<u>Poor</u> : rarely speaks; parrots text or comments of others	Little or no apparent familiarity with assigned material