SEMIMAR IN AMERICAN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
PSCI 510-01E
Spring 2013
4:30-7:10 PM Wed
SS 134

Professor: Dr. Jangsup Choi
E-mail: Jangsup.Choi@tamuc.edu
Office: Social Science Building 161
Phone: (903) 886-5314 (office)
Office hours: 12:30-2:00 T/Th and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This seminar focuses on current research on American political behavior. It examines topics such as public opinion, and political participation, and may give particular attention to electoral politics and voting behavior. The antecedents of opinions and participation are analyzed along with the consequences and implications of people’s opinions and behavioral patterns. Methods of studying these phenomena are critically assessed.

The study of political behavior focuses on the actions of—as opposed to the institutional constraints on—non-elite political actors (i.e., political citizens) as they interact with the political world through activities such as voting, joining parties and interest groups, protesting government actions, and consuming mass media. The course evaluates behavior from a variety of perspectives such as the psychological, economic, sociological, and political. Ultimately, this course will provide a setting for your own research in political behavior.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
For students to demonstrate an understanding of the political parties and be able to critically think, speak, and write about electoral politics. Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Discuss the major theories and controversies in research in political participation.
2. Discuss the major theories and controversies in research in voting behavior.
3. Discuss the major theories and controversies regarding ideology and party identification.
4. Demonstrate understanding about the current state of mass polarization.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK


GRADING
Research Paper 30% May 1 (3:00 pm)
Research Presentation 5% May 1 (in class)
Response Paper 10%  
Late-term Exam 20%  
Course Participation  
  Weekly Questions 10%  
  Readings Summary (including Seminar Lead) 15%  
  In-class Discussion 10%  
  Tuesdays by 7 pm
  Weekly (in class)

Grading Scale  
Excellent A = 100-90  
Good B = 89.9-80  
Average C = 79.9-70  
Below Average D = 69.9-60  
Unacceptable F = 59.9-0

RESEARCH PAPER  
In the first four weeks of the seminar (by Feb. 6) you will submit a paper proposal outlining the research paper you will write for this course. The paper proposal should not exceed two pages and should contain a brief summary of the theory, the hypotheses tested and the methods and data to be used. I will return these proposals with comments. You are free to alter the proposal and fine tune your hypotheses for the final research paper. The research paper should be a piece of original research based on secondary or primary data sources. The research paper should be structured as a journal article. The paper should be 14-16 pages in length. As part of your grade on the research paper you will be required to do a presentation of the paper in the last week of class.

RESPONSE PAPERS  
During the course of the semester, you will write two response papers addressing the assigned readings for a particular week. Your papers should not be a summary of the assigned readings (I already know what the author(s) said), but instead, provide some unique insight into the assigned readings. You do not need to try and include all of the assigned readings for a given week. For example, you might think about the themes that run through the readings, or the different theoretical or empirical approaches that the authors utilize, or whether the data and methods are appropriate to the question. These response papers should be two to three pages in length and are due by 7 pm, Tuesday of the assigned week. I will not accept any late papers. You choose when you want to write your papers, but you must do one before the end of February and one after February.

LATE-TERM EXAM  
In week 11 (March 27), you will be given a late-term exam in which you will be required to demonstrate your knowledge of the material covered in this seminar. You will have 48 hours to complete the exam after the questions are distributed.  
The format of the late-term exam will resemble that of the department’s qualifying exam. The exam will consist of 3 questions, of which you will answer two. You will be allowed to consult any of the course materials (books, readings, notes, discussion papers, and the like) but you are NOT allowed to discuss the exam with anyone but me. I will post the exam on eCollege at a specified point in time, and you will post your answers on eCollege.
**Weekly Questions**
One of the most underrated skills in academia is the ability to ask *good* questions. (Contrary to popular belief, there are such things as stupid questions.) This is your chance to practice. The questions should be analytical (theoretical) or methodological in nature and can focus directly on the reading or attempt to develop a tangential line of inquiry. In the latter case, these questions may be ideas for future research and/or conference papers. Perhaps you were inspired by an “off hand” comment in a footnote, or would like to examine how a particular work’s thesis might be updated to understand contemporary politics. You may also develop questions that “speak” to multiple readings. Be creative. Questions will be graded on a 3+, 3, 3- basis. You need not turn in questions for the first week of class (January 16) since you won’t have yet read this syllabus or the readings. You also are permitted two “bye” weeks of your own choosing. As these questions will be submitted to a class e-mail list available for viewing by all registered students, you are more than welcome to comment on questions submitted by other students.

**Readings Summary Reports / Seminar Lead**
Each group is required to lead seminar meetings. It is very important that seminar leaders come to class well prepared with interesting and thought provoking questions and topics of conversation.

As a seminar leader each group will be required to write a weekly report summarizing the readings to be discussed in class that week. These reports will be useful in preparing for your qualifying exams. Only one report per group is required (but make copies to circulate to everyone in your group). Group members will be rotated giving everybody a chance to work with everyone else. The author of each weekly report will be pre-assigned to guarantee a fair workload. In weeks where there are multiple works, the workload may be divided amongst groups (although you are asked to read all assigned readings). Reports should be approximately 800 words (roughly 3 double-spaced pages) and should summarize the following elements: 1) the principal question under investigation; 2) the theoretical perspective being used; 3) the logic of the argument; 4) the research design/methodology used; and 5) a suggested (brief) alternative methodology/research design. You may also want to include brief critiques of the work, though the primary intent of these reports is to provide you with future study guides. A secondary goal is to get you into working groups to discuss the readings so as to give us a “running start” for class discussion.

**In-Class Discussion**
Weekly class discussion will be open. Each student will be responsible for getting the discussion going. Although I will come with some structured design, the discussion is free to follow whatever path develops. Consider the class time to be a good, old-fashioned barroom debate (only more sober).

**Course Policies**

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is required and roll will be taken at every class. You will be dropped from this course if you miss more than 2 classes.

**Turnitin.com:** All response papers, exam, research paper should be posted on eCollege.
PLAGIARISM
Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. For example, forgetting to cite an author and page number with a quote is plagiarism, as is direct copying and pasting from a website. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course. Make sure to reverence all ideas and opinions that are not your own. The general rule of thumb is to cite a source if you are in doubt. Please read the university guideline on plagiarism and if you are unclear about what is or is not plagiarism, see me.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS
Because this is a web-enhanced course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

Regular access to a good quality computer
Regular, high-quality Internet access, specifically, a high-speed internet connection, not dial-up or a cellular phone. Students should use the eCollege tutorial to test the quality and speed of their browser and ensure that it is compatible with the system. Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.

Access and Navigation
Student will access this course using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students can access their online courses using through the myLeo portal or directly from the URL http://online.tamuc.edu. In order to login, students will need both their CWID and password to access the myLeo site. If you do not know what your CWID or password is, please contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000 or by e-mail, helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

eCollege Student Technical Support
Technical support for eCollege is provided around the clock (24 hours a day/7 days a week) so if students experience technical issues with the class page itself they should contact the student help desk for assistance. Students can access support through one of three following methods:

1. Chat support: Students can access real-time chat support from within the course page by clicking on “Tech Support” in the tool bar and then clicking on “Chat Online.”
2. Phone: Students can access phone support by calling the toll free phone number for eCollege, 1-866-656-5511.
3. E-mail: Student can request assistance by e-mail eCollege directly at helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. Please note that you might not receive a response for 24 hours if you use the e-mail option.

   eCollege also has extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the ‘Help’ button on the toolbar.
COURSE SCHEDULE

This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses. Most of the readings are available through JSTOR or other electronic database.

Week 1 (Jan. 16)  Introduction and Organizational Meeting

Week 2 (Jan. 23)  Approaches to Political Behavior


Week 3 (Jan. 30)  Political Knowledge


Week 4 (Feb. 6)  Information Processing and Effect


Week 5 (Feb. 13)  Party Identification (Individual Level)

Week 6 (Feb. 20)  
**Macro-Level Party Identification**


Week 7 (Feb. 27)  
**Ideology**


Week 8 (March 6)  
**Political Participation**

Lewis-Beck et al. 2008. Ch. 5.  

Week 9 (March 13)  
**Spring Break**

Week 10 (March 20)  
**Latino and Black Political Participation**


---

**Week 11 (March 27)**  
**Late-Term Exam**  
Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Political Science Association

**Week 12 (April 3)**  
**Electoral Decision**


**Week 13 (April 10)**  
**Issue Voting**  
Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association


**Week 14 (April 17)**  
**Polarization**


Week 15 (April 24)  **Elections, Campaigns, and Representation**


Week 16 (May 1)  **Research Presentation**