Seminar in American Political Behavior
PSCI 510 01E
Fall 2015
6:00-8:45 PM Tue
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; 3:15-5:15 T and by appointment

Course Information

Textbook required:


Additional readings may be supplied on the web or in class.

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.

Learning Objectives
Upon completion of this course, students will 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.

**Course Policies and Procedures**

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

**Classroom Civility**
Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment which is conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from using electronic devices, challenging instructor’s authority, eating or drinking in class, coming in late or leaving early, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class. No student will be allowed to “dominate” any class period.

**Electronic Devices**
Switch off (or mute) personal electronic devices (cell phones, smartphones, iPads, iPods, mp3 players, and any kind) during class. If any of these devices are present in class, you will be asked to store them or leave the class immediately. Also tape recorders, camera and video phones, and all other visual and auditory recording or retention devices, are strictly prohibited in this class. Please do not bring or use those devices.

You may only use the laptop to take notes in a word processing program. No surfing or instant messages are allowed. Any student who uses the laptop for any purpose other than taking notes will not be allowed to use that laptop in this course for the rest of the term.

**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 and notification to the university. Plagiarism is often a result of improper citation and/or acknowledgement of sources; therefore, we will be going over plagiarism in class so you can avoid common pitfalls (and an F!). If a student needs additional assistance, please consult me during my office hours.

**Turnitin.com:** All papers and exam answers should be posted on eCollege.

**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: Students 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.

**Communication: Office hours and Email**

The best way to contact me is to stop by my office during office hours or to schedule an appointment. Outside of class email is also the dominant means of communication between the instructor and students. The instructor can usually be reached by email with little difficulty. Due to the vast increase in spam email, any email sent to me MUST include a subject line such as “PSCI 510” identifying it as class related. Without such a subject line, it is likely to be deleted without being read.

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**Student Conduct**

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All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook). Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

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**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148
Grading and Evaluation

Grading
The final grade will be determined on the following basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Dec. 15 (11:00 AM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Dec. 8 (11:00 AM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late-term Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Participation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Questions</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Mondays by 6:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings Summary + Seminar Lead</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Weekly (in class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Weekly (in class)</td>
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Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>89.9-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>79.9-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>69.9-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.9-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will do my best to help students with any other needs they may have. Do not wait until the end of the semester to see assistance as that will be too late to make a difference. In all cases, it is necessary for the student to discuss their concerns with me as soon as possible after the concern develops. There is little that can be done at the end of the semester to compensate for earlier difficulties.

Note: I am not responsible for your scholarships, academic eligibility in extracurricular activities, or graduation eligibility. Do not come to me pleading that you “need” or “have to” get a certain grade. The grade you earn is the grade you will get. Under no circumstance will I arbitrarily change a grade, so do not ask. NO exceptions! Also, there will be NO extra project for this class regardless of the situation. Also, I am not allowed to dispense or discuss grades over the phone or via email, but grades will be posted on the class web.

Research Paper
In the first five weeks of the seminar 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. You will 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 or conference paper. The paper should be 18-22 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. Late work will not be accepted under any circumstance. If you do not turn in your paper on time, you will receive a zero. I will discuss more details about the paper as the semester progresses.

Late-Term Exam
In week 11, 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.

**Attendance/Participation**

“Eighty five percent of success is merely showing up.” — Woody Allen —

Students are expected to attend every class session; attendance will be taken regularly. Each unexcused absence beyond one (1) instance will result in a 10% reduction in the attendance grade. Students sleeping, talking, text messaging or otherwise not paying attention in class will be marked absent. Students who arrive late or leave early will be counted as absences.

Consistent with University policies and procedures, students who are absent for 2 class meetings will be administratively dropped from the class. There will be no “excused” absences aside for official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.

**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 political behavior. You may also develop questions that “speak” to multiple readings. Be creative. You are permitted one “bye” week of your own choosing.

**Readings Summary Reports / Seminar Lead**

Each student will be assigned to a group for the duration of the course. 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 is required, but make copies to circulate to everyone. The author(s) of each weekly report will be pre-assigned to guarantee a fair workload.

Reports 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 order to receive credits, seminar leaders should prepare hardcopies of reading summaries for classmates in the class and post MS-Word documents of their summaries on eCollege by 11 AM, next day of seminar lead.

**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 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 (Sep. 1) Introduction and Organizational Meeting

Week 2 (Sep. 8) Approaches to Political Behavior


Week 3 (Sep. 15) Political Knowledge


Week 4 (Sep. 22) Information Processing and Effect


Week 5 (Sep. 29) Party Identification (Individual Level)

Week 6 (Oct. 6)  Macro-Level Party Identification


Week 7 (Oct. 13)  Ideology


Week 8 (Oct. 20)  Political Participation

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

Week 9 (Oct. 27)  Latino and Black Political Participation


Week 10 (Nov. 3)  Electoral Decision


**Week 11 (Nov. 10)**  
Late-Term Exam

**Week 12 (Nov. 17)**  
Issue Voting


**Week 13 (Nov. 24)**  
Elections, Campaigns, and Representation


**Week 14 (Dec. 1)**  
Polarization


**Week 15 (Dec. 8)**  
Research Presentation

**Week 16 (Dec. 15)**  
Research Paper