Class Description

This course examines the processes whereby citizens (a) choose to participate in politics (or not); and (b – assuming they do choose to participate), decide which party and candidates to support. We will also consider whether people get anything from government (or politics) because of their participation. Throughout the course we will consider what democratic theory requires of citizens, and ask how well they (we) generally live up to those requirements. We will study almost exclusively the American political system, and be concerned chiefly with national elections.

As political science majors, you should know what political scientists have said about these topics. Thus we will study them from that (largely academic) perspective – meaning objective (i.e., nonpartisan), abstract, concerned much more with the general point and patterns established over time rather than the particulars of any one election.

Of course for many people, this takes much of the fun out of politics. There is a pretty big election occurring this Fall. So students will also study topics of very current and/or partisan, interest which relate, in different ways, to broader topics we are discussing in class. This semester we will look primarily at battleground states where the presidential election will be determined, and competitive Senate and House races that will determine which party will control Congress for the 2009 - 2010 term. We could also have advocacy reports from the McCain and Obama campaigns if students in class are involved in either of them. Hence presentation and paper topics will include:

- Why should you vote for John McCain?
- Why should you vote for Barack Obama?
- Which candidate is likely to win Colorado (Florida/Indiana/Iowa/Michigan/Minnesota/Missouri/Montana/Nevada/New Hampshire/North Carolina/North Dakota/Ohio/Oregon/Pennsylvania/Virginia/Wisconsin)? How has the state leaned in the past five presidential elections, and what seems to be shaping the election in the state this year?
- Who will win the Senate election in Louisiana and Georgia? Virginia and Kentucky? Mississippi and Michigan? Etc. Who has raised the most money? And what are the issues in those races?
- Who will win the congressional election in the Alabama 4th and 5th districts? The California 11th and 12th? The Pennsylvania 9th and 10th? The Connecticut 3rd and 4th? Etc. Who has raised the most money? And what are the issues in those races?
- Are there any competitive elections in New Jersey they year?
We will choose topics in about the third week of class. Each of you will give a brief class presentation on your topic and write a short paper describing your predictions for the upcoming election.

Each day there will be a reading assignment that you are expected to complete before class. You will get the most out of this class if, in addition, you actually think about the reading enough to know what you understand, and what you do not understand.

**Grades will be based on:**

- A short-answer/multiple choice midterm during the 8th week of class .................. 35%
- and a similar exam during finals week ........................................................................ 35%
- A brief class presentation on a topic of current interest in politics ......................... 10%
- and a short paper on that same topic ........................................................................ 10%
- Class participation ........................................................................................................ 10%

*You also must pass a “proficiency exam” in American politics to receive credit for this class.* You will receive a copy of this exam on the first day of class.

**Required Readings**

The following books are required for this class. They are all for sale in the Douglass book store.


**Note:** The 4th edition of the Niemi and Weisberg volume is necessary, as this book changes completely from edition to edition. You can get by with earlier (and presumably cheaper) editions of the other two books, however, without missing too much.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>Introduction: How Does Democracy &quot;Work?&quot; Why Do People Participate in Politics? Is it “Rational” to Do So? Science and the Study of Politics</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch. 1 Controversies, Ch 1</td>
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<td>9/8</td>
<td>Types of Political Participation. Trends over time.</td>
<td>Controversies, Ch 2</td>
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<td>9/11</td>
<td>Who Participates in Politics? Types of Political Participators; The SES Model; (Individual-level factors)</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>Election Laws, Motor Voters, GOTV efforts, and Other Institutional Factors Influencing Participation.</td>
<td>Controversies, Ch 4</td>
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<td>9/18</td>
<td>U.S. Turnout in Comparative Perspective</td>
<td>Controversies, Ch 5</td>
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<td>9/22</td>
<td>Why has Participation Declined? Bowling Alone, Social Capital, and Other Societal Factors Influencing Participation; Does Negative Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?</td>
<td>Controversies, Ch 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/25</td>
<td>Paper/presentation assignments and discussion of class election project</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch. 3</td>
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<td>9/29</td>
<td>Party Systems and the History of American Politics (In Two Easy Lessons)</td>
<td>Controversies, Ch 21</td>
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<td>10/2</td>
<td>(Continued)</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch. 4 Controversies, Chs 23</td>
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<td>10/6</td>
<td>Blue States vs. Red States: Columbia and the Social Basis of Voting;</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch. 5 Controversies, Ch 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/13</td>
<td>Issue Voting and the Rational Choice Perspective Report on the NJ Federal Elections</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch. 6</td>
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<td>10/16</td>
<td>Pocketbook Voting and the Symbolic Politics Alternative</td>
<td>Controversies, Ch 11</td>
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<td>10/20</td>
<td><strong>Midterm</strong></td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>10/23</td>
<td>Student Reports: The presidential race in 12 (?) battleground states</td>
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<td>10/27</td>
<td>Student Reports: 20 competitive, and not so competitive, Senate elections</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>Student Reports: 30 competitive, and not so competitive, House elections</td>
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<td>11/3</td>
<td>The 2000 Presidential Election; Who Really Won Florida? Should the Supreme Have Court Decided the Election? Would it Matter?</td>
<td>Jacobson, Ch 1, Ch 2</td>
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<td>11/6</td>
<td>Video: Bill Moyers and Kathleen Hall Jamieson on Political Ads</td>
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<td>11/10</td>
<td>Interpretations/Consequences of the 2008 National Presidential Election. How accurate were our predictions?</td>
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<td>11/13</td>
<td>Candidate Images</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch. 8; Controversies, Ch 13</td>
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<td>11/17</td>
<td>The Vote Decision.</td>
<td>Controversies, Chs 10, 12</td>
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<td>11/20</td>
<td>Are Political Campaigns Effective?</td>
<td>Flanigan &amp; Zingale, Ch 7; Jacobson, Ch 4, pp 87-105</td>
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<td>11/24</td>
<td>Congressional Elections: Surge and Decline and Other National Influences on Congressional Elections</td>
<td>Jacobson, Ch 5; 6, pp 155-175</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/25</td>
<td>Congressional Elections: Constituency Service, Candidate Quality, and Other Local Factors</td>
<td>Jacobson, Chs 3, 4, pp 63 - 87</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/1</td>
<td>Congressional Elections: Split Ticket Voting, Divided Government, and Other Rational Influence on Congressional Elections</td>
<td>Controversies, Chs 14,15</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/4</td>
<td>What Difference Does Political Information Make? Do Most (Many? Any?) People Vote “Correctly”?</td>
<td>Controversies, Chs 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/8</td>
<td>What Difference Does Participation Make? Are Participators Better Represented? Democracy Reconsidered ...</td>
<td>Jacobson, Ch. 7</td>
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**FINAL:** Friday, Dec. 19th, 4 - 6
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The articles/chapters listed below are optional reading for the course.

Political Participation and Turnout


[Several other articles in the symposium on Latino Politics in the U.S.]


Party Identification, Political Parties, and Party Systems


Political Campaigns/Media Effects in Politics


Campbell, James E. “Assessment of the 2004 Presidential Vote Forecasts.” PS: Political Science and Politics, 38(January): 23 - 40 [see assessments by all the major players – Wlezien and


See also the special issue of the *American Behavioral Scientist*, November 2005, Vol. 49, No. 3, which focuses on media effects during the 2004 U.S. presidential election.
Voting Behavior (in Presidential Primaries/General Elections)


Gelpi, Christopher, Jason Reifler, and Peter Feaver. 2007. “Iraq the Vote: Retrospective and Prospective Foreign Policy Judgments on Candidate Choice and Casualty Tolerance.” Political Behavior, 29(June): 151 - 174.


Congressional Elections


Gender and Politics


Ethnic/Racial Groups and Politics


See also several articles on Asian Americans and politics in *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 2000, 34(September).


Public Policy


Deliberation, Democracy, Democratic Culture, Political Knowledge, and Social Capital


See the special issues of the *American Behavioral Scientist* (July 2009; Vol. 52, No. 11; January 2010, Vol 53, No 1) about social capital and social networks.