

## POLA 4150 – Elections in America

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This course will introduce the U.S. electoral system and we will cover the presidential election from the nomination phase through the general election, as well as congressional elections. Students will learn to understand the dynamics of election systems, campaigns for national office, and voting behavior. Although we will see that much of the rhetoric about the 2016 having turned all theories of political science on their heads is overblown, we will examine the 2016 presidential election in some detail. How did Trump win? Why did Clinton lose?

I encourage students to **register to vote**. College students may register to vote in their city of residence or in their home (but not both). Go to <https://www.usvotefoundation.org/vote/state-elections/state-election-dates-deadlines.htm> to find out the deadlines for each state. Do not delay!!

### **Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course, students will have demonstrated substantive knowledge and analytical competence in the understanding of the electoral system in the United States. Students will demonstrate this knowledge through oral presentations, class discussion, and satisfactory completion of all assignments and exams. Students should develop an understanding of the history of national elections in the U.S. and the current challenges to the presidential and congressional election system.

### **Required Materials:**

Alan Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation & the Rise of Donald Trump* (Yale University Press, 2018).

John H. Aldrich, et al., *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Elections* (CQ Press, 2019).

Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (University of Chicago Press, 2018).

All other readings are either on Canvas or the link is provided.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Regular Attendance and Active Class Participation:** 15%

**Attendance:** If you miss class due to an excused absence, I will work with you to make up work. Whether excused or unexcused, it is **your responsibility** to communicate with me and to get notes from a classmate.

Excused absences include: University-sponsored events (not athletic practices – games only), deaths in the family, religious observance, jury duty, illnesses within reason & with appropriate documentation.

They do not include: family reunions, weddings, graduations, or visits from relatives/friends; illnesses without documentation; traffic, parking difficulties, court dates, getting pulled over, computer crashes, lines for the printer, running out of paper/ink, and most of the other reasons students commonly miss class or turn work in late.

**Any unexcused absence on an exam or quiz means you forfeit all points.** There

are no exceptions and do not bother to ask for one.

*Participation:*

Minimum Expectations: Students must be on time and attend regularly, and all discussion must remain civil. Also, **I give pop quizzes.** There are no make-ups for missed quizzes. If you do the reading, you should not have trouble with the quizzes. In most cases, they are at the beginning of class, so don't be late. The following grades can be lowered based on lack of attendance or chronic tardiness.

Outstanding (A): Contributions in class reflect excellent preparation, thorough reading and reflection on the material in advance. Ideas offered are always substantive, providing important insights. Contributions took discussion in a useful and constructive direction. The student may make contributions that could be characterized as brave efforts to synthesize material in new ways, pose and answer difficult questions, bring in creative ideas which, if well-based and well-reasoned do not have to be 100% "right" all the time. Challenges to others are well-substantiated, clearly and persuasively presented, and civil. If this person were not a member of this class, the quality of discussion and the opportunities for learning would be diminished markedly.

Good (A-/B+): Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation or having done what is required. Ideas offered are generally substantive, are relevant to discussion, and contribute substantively to the direction of discussion. The contributions are good and worthwhile, but don't strike out in new or "brave" directions. Challenges to others are generally well-argued, often persuasive, and civil. If this person were not a member of this class, the quality of the discussion and the opportunities for learning would be diminished.

Adequate (B/B-): Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation, which usually means having done enough of the preparation to be on track. Ideas offered are generally useful but don't offer new directions or perspectives. An adequate contribution is unlikely to challenge others' ideas, but if it does, it is fairly well substantiated, somewhat if at all persuasive, and civil. If this person were not a member of this class, the quality of the discussion and the opportunities for learning would be diminished somewhat, at least for some people.

Unsatisfactory (C): Meets only minimum expectations with regard to attendance and tardiness. Says almost nothing and asks very few questions.

Poor (D/F): Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. They may be unrelated to the discussion and suggest that the contributor did not do the reading. Ideas offered are seldom substantive, provide few if any insights, and almost never a constructive direction for the class. They may be irrelevant to the discussion. The contributor may speak without regard of other participants: e.g. in an uncivil manner, at undue length, or challenging others in a manner that is unsubstantiated. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable air time would be saved.

*Adapted from V. Sapiro at Boston University.*

Exams: 40% (20% each)

There is a midterm and a cumulative final exam. Final examinations are to be held at the time publicized in the Final Examination Schedule posted on the Registrar's website.

Any student who is absent from a final examination will be given permission to take a make-up examination only if an acceptable excuse is presented to an associate dean in Newcomb-Tulane College before the exam or within 24 hours after

the exam. A student whose absence from a final examination is not excused is to be given an "F" in the course.

Scholarly Blog Post: 25%

Over the course of this semester, you will read several scholarly blog posts, such as those on the *Monkey Cage* at the *Washington Post*. Unlike the stream of consciousness blog posts that are common all over the internet, these posts are grounded in social science and/or political theory. You must write a 1500-2000 word blog post akin to those we have read this semester on a topic related to U.S. elections. These posts must:

- Contribute new knowledge or analysis – This will mean you may need to analyze poll data, examine elections from a new theoretical perspective (using empirical evidence of your claims), collect your own data through interviews or surveys or content analysis, analyze the media's coverage in some unique way, discuss issues of election process (with evidence), etc. You may compare the US to other countries or this election to historical elections/periods. You may discuss public policy as related to elections or campaigns. The topic is open.
- Ground your research question, hypotheses and findings in the appropriate political science literature, as you've seen in these posts. Cite this literature (including links to articles and/or books) in your post.
- **Papers are due no later than November 15** at the beginning of class. You may turn in your paper at any time before then. Papers turned in by November 1 that earn a C or lower will be able to be revised. The final grade will be an average of the revised paper and the original paper.

Congressional Case Study: 20%

By/on Aug 30, students must select a 2018 congressional race to profile throughout the semester. Every student must select a different race, and selection is first come, first served. It must be a race for the U.S. House. There will be an assignment sheet for the research paper.

NOTE ABOUT WRITTEN WORK:

**Students must turn in two copies of each part of their papers.** One should be uploaded to Canvas. The other should be a hard copy. **Assignments are due at the beginning of class.** Once I have taken attendance and started class, assignments are considered late and will be docked 5 points (half letter grade). Papers turned in after class is over are docked one letter grade **per day** (not per class).

In written assignments, grammar and style count nearly as much as the content. Proofread your work. Go to the Writing Center. **Put the word count at the top of page 1. Number all pages.**

Staple your hard copies!

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic honesty is expected of all students at Tulane. Your responsibilities as a Tulane student include being familiar with the honor code and the plagiarism policy of the University.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Board, and may result in a failing grade for the class, academic probation, or expulsion.

**Ignorance is not a valid excuse.**

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to the following actions:

- a) presenting another's work, ideas, expressions or research as if it were one's own;
- b) failing to acknowledge or document a source even if the action is unintended (i.e., plagiarism\*);
- c) fabricating or altering citations;
- d) giving or receiving, or attempting to give or receive, unauthorized assistance or information in an assignment or examination;
- e) submitting the same assignment in two or more courses without prior permission of both instructors;
- f) having another person write a paper or sit for an examination (includes online paper-mills);
- g) using tests or papers from students in prior semesters;
- h) sabotaging the work of another through destroying or preventing work from receiving fair assessment (especially in group projects)

**\*Plagiarism** includes copying & pasting material from any source (Wikipedia, paper mill, other internet site, book, journal, newspaper, magazine, etc.) without proper attribution. Plagiarism also includes non-verbatim borrowing of words or ideas through paraphrasing or summarizing another's work(s) without proper attribution.

**Grading Scale:**

A	92.5 - 100
A-	89.5 - 92.4
B+	87.5 - 89.4
B	82.5 - 87.4
B-	79.5 - 82.4
C+	77.5 - 79.4
C	72.5 - 77.4
C-	69.5 - 72.4
D	59.5 - 69.4
F	Lower than 59.4

If you have any other special circumstances, such as involvement with a university activity that requires you to miss class, let me know as soon as possible. If, during the semester, issues arise that are likely to affect your participation, attendance or performance, it is in your interest to let me know as soon as they arise. You may consult with your academic advisor or Erica Woodley in Student Affairs if issues are serious enough that you need temporary accommodations.

**Electronics Policy**

**No electronic devices may be used in class**, including laptops, cell phones, tablets, I-watches, etc. If this poses a problem for you, please discuss it with me. I am reasonable and discrete. If you see others "breaking the rules," it is none of your business.

This policy extends to audio and video recording of lectures. Students are expected to respect the intellectual property of course instructors.

- Students must obtain permission to record classroom activities.
- When permission is given, such content is restricted to personal use.
- Recordings are not to be shared with other students and should not be posted online.

Devices are not allowed to be out of backpacks or purses during quizzes and exams. **Any student who is caught with one of these devices out will have his/her/their test/quiz taken and will be charged with the Honor Code violation of cheating.**

**Classroom Conduct:** Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and

gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available: you can learn more at [titleix.tulane.edu](http://titleix.tulane.edu). Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either “Confidential” or “Private” as explained in the chart below.

Please know that if you choose to confide in me I am mandated by the university to report to the Title IX Coordinator, as Tulane and I want to be sure you are connected with all the support the university can offer. You do not need to respond to outreach from the university if you do not want.

Confidential
<i>Except in extreme circumstances nothing shared without your explicit permission</i>
Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)   (504) 314-2277 The Line (24/7)   (504) 264-6074
Student Health Center   (504) 865-5255
Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE)   (504) 654-9543

Private
<i>Conversations are kept as confidential as possible; info shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and take action for safety.</i>
Case Management & Victim Support Services   (504) 314-2160 or <a href="mailto:srss@tulane.edu">srss@tulane.edu</a>
Tulane University Police (TUPD)   (504) 865-5911
Title IX Coordinator   (504) 314-2160 or <a href="mailto:msmith76@tulane.edu">msmith76@tulane.edu</a>

**Barriers to Success:**

If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment, please feel free to contact me and/or the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility. This information is confidential. Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or to email me to schedule an appointment.

If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations, please contact the Goldman Center online or at 504.862.8433.

Students needing accommodations must provide me with a Course Accommodation Form and if applicable, an Exam Request Form (“blue sheet”) to schedule an exam to be taken at the Goldman Center.

Accommodations involving exams must be requested **well in advance**. Any student receiving an exam-related accommodation should plan to take the exam at the Goldman Center.

## Course Topics, Readings and Due Dates

### I. Fundamentals

Aug 28: Introductions

Aug 30: No Class (professor at conference)

- Mason, chapters 1-6

Sept 4: Uncivil Agreement

- Mason, chapters 1-6

Sept 6: Presidential Nomination Process

- Aldrich, et al. chapter 1

Sept 11: 2016 Presidential Nominations

- [How does the Republican party solve a problem like Donald Trump?](#), Boris Heersink
- ["Bernie Sanders's Base Isn't the Working Class. It's Young People,"](#) Jeff Stein
- ["Why Republican Voters Decided on Donald Trump,"](#) Nate Silver
- "How the News Media Helped to Nominate Trump," Julia Azari

Sept 13: The General Election

- Aldrich, et al. chapters 2-3
- ["An Extremely Detailed Presidential Election Map"](#)

Sept 18: Electoral Systems & Registration

- "What Are Voting Systems?" Douglas Amy
- "Voter ID Laws & the Suppression of Minority Votes," Zoltan Hajnal, et al.

Sept 20: Congressional Elections

- Aldrich, et al. chapters 9-10
- "It's Nothing Personal," Gary Jacobson

Sept 25: Midterm Election Issues

- "Balancing, Generic Polls & Midterm Congressional Elections," Joseph Bafumi, et al.
- "Electoral Campaigns & the Incumbency Advantage," James Druckman, et al.
- "Gerrymandering Incumbency," John Henderson, et al.

- ["This might be the way to prove partisan gerrymandering..."](#) Bernard Grofman

### II. Campaign Effects

Sept 27: Did HRC run a bad campaign?

- ["Why Clinton Lost,"](#) Molly Ball
- ["My one contribution to the autopsies of the 2016 presidential election,"](#) Dan Drezner
- ["New data makes it clear: Nonvoters handed Trump the presidency,"](#) Philip Bump
- "Political Advertising in 2016," Erika Franklin Fowler, et al.
- "The Myths of Data-Driven Campaigning," Jessica Baldwin-Philippi

Oct 2: Campaign Strategies

- "Separation by Television Program: Understanding the Targeting of Political Advertising in Presidential Elections," Travis N. Ridout, et al.
- "All about that Base," Costas Panagopoulos
- "When to Attack," Hans Hassell & Kelly Oeltjenbruns
- Watch: ["Dukakis & the Tank"](#)

Oct 4: Campaign \$\$\$

- "Super PACs and the 2012 Elections," Victoria A. Farrar-Myers & Richard Skinner
- ["If You Think Super PACs Changed Everything about the Presidential Primary, Think Again,"](#) David Karol
- ["Donald Trump's campaign is still on track to raise amazingly little money,"](#) John Sides
- Look up contributions & spending history for Hillary Clinton & Donald Trump campaigns

### Oct 9: Midterm Exam

Oct 11: No Class (Fall Break)

### III. Partisanship

Oct 16: It's the Partisanship, Stupid!

- Abramowitz, chapters 1-4

Oct 18: I Don't Love Him; I Hate You.

- Abramowitz, chapter 5-end

### IV. Race & Gender

Oct 23: Turnout & Demographics

- Aldrich, et al. chapters 4-5
- "The New White Flight?" Mara Cecilia Ostfeld
- "Selective Recruitment or Voter Neglect?" Ricardo Ramirez, et al.
- Some Twitter learning on "[Identity Politics](#)" (focus on the original post, first response, and responses by Masket & Azari)

#### Congressional Election Paper Due

Oct 25: "Racial Resentment" (aka racism)

- "Explaining the Trump Vote: Effect of Racist Resentment & Anti-Immigrant Sentiments," Marc Hooghe & Ruth Dassonneville
- "Status Threat, Not Economic Hardship, Explains 2016 Presidential Vote," Diana Mutz
- Race, Gender & the 2016 Presidential Election," Tasha Philpot
- "[Race Mattered More in Electing Trump than in Electing Obama.](#)" Michael Tesler

Oct 30: Did you think I'd forget the sexism?

- "A Comparative Assessment of Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential Race," Farida Jalalzai
- "Reconciling Sexism & Women's Support for Republican Candidates," Erin Cassesse & Tiffany Barnes
- "Mobilizing Sexism," Nicholas Valentino, et al.
- "Is Sexism for White People?" Ana Bracic, et al.

Nov 1: Masculinity Problems

- "Strength, Stamina & Sexism in the 2016 Presidential Race," Meredith Conroy
- "Authenticity & Emotion: HRC's Dual Constraints," Lilly Goren
- "Playing the Trump Card: Masculinity Threat," Emily Carian & Tagart Cain Sobotka
- "[Hillary Clinton Talks More Like a Man Than She Used To.](#)" Jennifer Jones

### V. The Media

Nov 6: The Media Suck **Election Day!!**

- "For Whom the Poll Airs," Kathleen Searles, et al.
- "Partisanship, Propaganda, & Disinformation," Robert Faris, et al.

Nov 8: Russian bots & Internet trolls

- "Analyzing the Digital Traces of Political Manipulation," Adam Badawy, et al.
- "Visual War: A Content Analysis of Clinton & Trump Subreddits," Brent Hale & Maria Elizabeth Grabe
- "The Communicative Constitution of Hate Orgs Online," Sean Eddington

Nov 13: Fake News

- "It Feels Like We're Thinking" Christopher Achen & Larry Bartels
- "They See Dead People (Voting)," Mirya Holman & J. Celeste Lay
- "Social Media & Fake News in the 2016 Election," Hunt Allcott & Matthew Gentzkow

### VI. Issues, Performance & Trust

Nov 15: Retrospective Voting

- Aldrich, et al. chapter 6-7

#### Blog Post Assignment Due

Nov 20: Economic Voting

- "The Elusive Mandate," & "Musical Chairs: Economic Voting & the Specious Present" Christopher Achen & Larry Bartels

Nov 22: No Class (Thanksgiving)

Nov 27: The Economy in 2016?

- "The Racial & Economic Context of Trump Support," Eric Knowles & Linda Tropp
- ["Racial Attitudes & Political Correctness in the 2016 Presidential Election,"](#) Matt Grossman

Nov 29: Americans' Attitudes about Democracy

- "Process Preferences and American Politics: What the People Want Government to Be," John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse
- "The Strategic Promotion of Distrust in Government in the Tea Party Age," Amy Fried and Douglas B. Harris
- ["A Surprising Number of Americans Dislike How Messy Democracy Is. They Like Trump,"](#) John Hibbing & Elizabeth Theiss-Morse

## **VII: The Polls**

Dec 4: Polls Are Hard to Understand

- "An Evaluation of the 2016 Election Polls in the United States" Courtney Kennedy, et al.
- "Projecting Confidence: How the probabilistic horse race confuses & demobilizes the public," Sean Westwood et al.
- ["Trump's Up 3! Clinton's Up 9!"](#) Andrew Gelman & David Rothschild

Dec 6: What does it all mean?

- "Trumpism and American Democracy," Robert Lieberman, et al.

Dec 16: 1pm – Final Exam