

Voting, Elections, & Public Opinion

Spring 2006

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Political Science 3180-001
Hinckley Caucus Room
Tuesday & Thursday OSH 255
7:30- 8:50 am

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Purpose:

This course is designed to study the Electoral Process and Public Opinion in America today. We seek to understand the behavior of individual citizens as well as the institutions and processes associated with parties, campaigns, and elections. In this course, we will focus on American Democracy; political culture and ideology; public opinion and how it is formed and measured; how political campaigns are conducted and financed; and we will study the Congressional laws and Supreme Court decisions to understand the history and development of Campaign Finance. In addition to these, we will examine political polling and discuss the use and misuse of polling data in today's elections. Hopefully, through this course, we will encourage greater participation in American politics and improve our election system.

Text:

Your instructor strongly suggests that each student purchase the required texts:

1. Booker, "Public Opinion in the 21st Century." Here in know as Booker.
2. Dudley, Robert and Alan Gitelson. American Elections: the Rules Matter. Addison- Welsey Educational Publishers, 2002. Here in known as Dudley.
3. Wayne, Stephens J. The Road to the White House 2004: The Politics of Presidential Elections, Wadsworth, 2004. Here in known as Wayne.

Grading:

Course grades will be based on the following:

1. Midterm Exam 25%
2. Research Paper 25%
3. Report on the State of the Union Address 5%
4. Comprehensive Final 40%
5. Attendance 5%

Requirements:

All students are required to attend class and complete the assigned reading. You will need to have a reasonable knowledge of current events concerning the state, nation, and the international community. In addition, you must keep up with current events both nationally and statewide for the 2006 and 2008 elections. You are strongly encouraged to read the newspaper (*The Salt Lake Tribune, the Deseret News, and the New York Times*), watch weekly

news shows (*Meet the Press, Face the Nation, Hard Ball with Chris Matthews, etc.*), and attend Voting Caucuses on March 21st.

Papers and Assignments:

You will be required to watch the State of the Union Address and write a three page paper on “The Impact of the State of the Union on American Public Opinion.”

You will be required to write one ten page research paper due March 9th. Further lecture materials and information about your research paper will be provided throughout the course of the semester.

Exams:

The midterm exam is scheduled for Thursday February 23rd. (Note: this is a tentative date and is subject to change). The final will be held Tuesday May 2nd from 8:00- 10:00 am.

Course Outline:

I. Democracy

- a. A Decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind (Booker, Ch. 1 & lecture materials)

II. Brief Electoral History and Realignment

- a. Defining the Electorate (Dudley, Ch. 1)
- b. Political redistricting both national and local (Dudley, Ch. 1)

III. Elections

- a. The Nomination Process: getting on the ballot (Dudley, Ch. 2 and Clark supplement)
- b. National Nomination Conventions (Wayne, Ch. 5)
- c. Utah Nomination System (lecture & handout)
- d. Congress accepts electoral vote (lecture)
- e. Casting and Counting Ballots (Dudley, Ch. 4)
- f. Guest Speaker

IV. Presidential Elections

- a. Understanding Presidential Elections (Wayne, Ch. 6 & 8)
- b. Special Case Study: The Electoral College (lecture)
- c. Electoral College Voting (Wayne, Ch. 1 & Dudley, Ch. 6)
- d. Alternative to the Electoral College (Wayne, Ch. 9 & lecture)

V. Congressional Elections

- a. U.S. Senate and U.S. House- Will Republicans maintain their majority in both houses? (Lecture)

VI. Case Study: Redistricting in Utah, focusing on the 2nd Congressional District

VII. Campaign Finance

- a. Money Constituency (Dudley, Ch. 3)
- b. The Cost of Campaigning (Wayne, Ch. 2)
- c. History of Campaign Finance and Supreme Court decisions (handout)
- d. State Campaign Finance (lecture)
- e. Campaign Finance loopholes and 527 organizations (lecture)
- f. Guest Speaker

- VIII. Public Opinion and Effecting Public Policy**
 - a. Public Opinion Today (Booker, Ch. 8)
 - b. Overall review of the issues that impacted the 2004 election: Race, sexual preference, war in Iraq, etc.
 - c. Guest Speaker
- IX. Measuring Public Opinion**
 - a. Measuring Public Opinion (Booker, Ch. 2 & 3)
 - b. Guest Speaker
- X. The Effects of the Media**
 - a. Media Politics (Wayne, Ch. 7)
 - b. The Mass Media and Public Opinion (Booker, Ch. 6)
- XI. Voting Behavior & Voting Management**
 - a. The Political environment at the national and state level (Wayne, Ch. 3)
 - b. Who votes? Turn out and participation (Wayne, pg. 114-115)
 - c. Guest Speaker

When appropriate, various speakers will be invited to speak to the class. **Please be in attendance.** Questions taken from their presentations will be on the midterm and final exam.

Important Dates:

Class will not be on the 14th and 16th of March due to Spring break.
Last day of class will be April 25th.