PRO-SEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Instructor: Professor Mockabee
Office Hours: Tues., Thurs. 11 am - 12 pm, or by appointment.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This graduate course reviews the research literature on mass political behavior in the United States. Topics to be covered include partisanship, political attitudes, and voting behavior. The student learning outcomes for this course include the following:

• Demonstrate understanding of the key findings from research on American political behavior
• Critically compare different theoretical approaches to the study of political behavior.
• Critically assess different methodological approaches to the study of political behavior.
• Evaluate new research on political behavior in the context of extant research literature.

Although there may be a brief lecture component for certain topics, the course will be structured primarily as a seminar, with students expected to participate extensively in class discussion.

In addition to classroom-based instruction, we will use a class web site created on the university’s Blackboard system. This site will contain a class schedule, links to readings, electronic copies of course documents, and links to helpful Internet resources.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to attend class, complete the required reading assignments, participate in class discussion, and submit written work on time. Grades will be based on class participation (25%), a review essay (35%), and a take-home final exam (40%).

More detail about the assignments will be given in class, but here is a summary. The essay will be a review of literature on a focused topic of the student’s choosing, and will draw upon readings beyond those in the required book. The essay should be in the range of 12-15 pages, double-spaced. Topics for this paper should be discussed with the
instructor as early as possible during the quarter. The take-home exam will be distributed by the day of the final class meeting, and will include comprehensive questions asking for synthesis of the required readings. All written work will be due at **5:00 pm on Tuesday, June 7**. Extensions of this deadline may be given for the review essay, but not for the final exam.

The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s assessment of the quality of a student’s participation in class discussions and activities. As part of this assessment, a record of class attendance will be kept.

**POLICIES AND CAVEATS:**

- If you are having difficulty with the class, please do not hesitate to talk to me. I am happy to meet with you during office hours or to set up an appointment. E-mail is usually the best way to reach me ([Stephen.Mockabee@uc.edu](mailto:Stephen.Mockabee@uc.edu)).
- When sending me an e-mail, please remember to sign your full name. This will insure a prompt response. (Occasionally I receive messages from free e-mail services like hotmail or yahoo with no identifying information. For example, I may not know the identity of “bearcatfan06” etc.)
- If you have a disability that affects your performance in class, please tell me at the beginning of the quarter and I will do my best to help. For advice and assistance you may contact the university’s disability services office, located in 210 University Pavilion (phone: 556-6823; e-mail: [disabisv@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:disabisv@ucmail.uc.edu)).
- Unless otherwise indicated, all homework is due at the beginning of class. At the discretion of the instructor, late homework may be penalized by up to twenty-five percent (25%) per day. Assignments submitted more than three (3) calendar days after the due date will likely result in a zero for that assignment (except when an excuse is approved by the instructor).
- It is each student's responsibility to know and comply with the University's Student Code of Conduct. The Code describes behavior expected of all University of Cincinnati students and defines behavior considered misconduct, including cheating, plagiarism, and classroom disruption. The possible sanctions and penalties for misconduct are also outlined in this document. Copies may be obtained from your college office or on-line at [http://www.uc.edu/Trustees/Rules/RuleDetail.asp?ID=184](http://www.uc.edu/Trustees/Rules/RuleDetail.asp?ID=184)
- All of the work you submit in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. More information about plagiarism can be found online by clicking [http://www.libraries.uc.edu/instruction/students/plagiarism.html](http://www.libraries.uc.edu/instruction/students/plagiarism.html)
- All cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off during class.
- This syllabus is subject to change.
**READINGS:**

**Required book:**


In addition to readings from the Niemi, Weisberg, and Kimball book (hereafter “NWK”), there will also be required supplemental readings on specific topics. Whenever possible, links to electronic versions will be posted on the class web page. Photocopies of handouts and short readings will be distributed by the instructor as needed throughout the quarter.

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

This is a general guide to the subjects that will be covered, and is organized by topic rather than by date. Specific reading assignments will be announced regularly in class. Please ask if you are unsure about where we are heading in the course, or about what the reading assignments are at any point. (A tentative class schedule can be found at the end of the syllabus.)

I. Introduction and Overview of the Subfield
   NWK, chapter 1

II. Political Participation
   NWK, chapters 2-4

III. Political Information (or Lack Thereof)
   NWK chapters 5-8
   Lazarsfeld, et al. 1948. *The People’s Choice* [excerpts on Bb]

IV. Vote Determinants
   NWK chapters 9-11.
Lazarsfeld, et al. 1948. *The People’s Choice* [excerpts on Bb]

V. Party Polarization and Culture Wars
NWK chapters 12-17

VI. Party System Change (a.k.a. Realignment)
NWK chapters 18-21

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

The following is a tentative schedule indicating when we will cover the topics outlined above. Please note that this schedule is subject to change. Updates will be announced at each class meeting and via email.

3/29:  Course Introduction and overview
4/5:  Political Participation
4/12:  Finish participation; start political information
4/19:  Political Information
4/26:  Finish political information; Start vote determinants
5/3:  Vote determinants
5/10:  Party Polarization
5/17:  Party Polarization

5/24:  Party system change

5/31:  Party system change; tie up any loose ends; Final exam distributed

6/7:   Final exam and paper due by 5:00 PM.