Politics Course V53.0505
and the Alexander Hamilton Center for Political Economy:
The Politics of Elections and Voting

Perhaps no other political activity is as important for public policy in democratic (and even quasi-democratic) countries as voting and elections, which determine who the ultimate policy makers will be. Thus if we ever hope to understand why governments produce the policies they do, we have to begin by asking why people vote the way they do? Why do certain parties and candidates lose elections, while others win? How important is the economy in influencing election results? And why do some people choose not to vote at all? As democracy in its various forms spreads across the globe, more and more people are voting. In response, this course studies elections and voting as a truly international phenomenon. Topics closely related to voting and elections – such as political parties, electoral rules and systems, and partisan identification – are explored as well. Students will also use to learn political science methods based on logic and evidence to explore competing explanations for these and other questions.

Requirements

The course meets twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursday from 12:30 – 1:45) for lectures in Silver Center 408. Grading is based on an in-class mid-term to be held on March 9th (25%), a final exam to be held on May 11th (50%), and a 5-7 page paper (25%). The paper topic will be handed out in class on April 25th, and will be due at the start of class one week later on May 2nd. Please note that dates listed on this syllabus will be changed when I know what days of the week the course will be taught and are intended for now to show only how many lectures are devoted to each topic.

Readings

Students are required to complete all readings on the syllabus, and are encouraged to do so before the relevant lecture. As there is neither a recitation, nor a research paper, nor problem sets for this course, the only work you need to outside of lecture for the class is the reading. There are approximately 150-200 pages of reading a week, but this varies significantly by week. In general, Parts I and V have less reading than Parts II, III, and IV, so please plan ahead accordingly! Bottom line: do the readings. You will learn more, and you will do better on the exams. If you do not want to do these readings, please do not take the course.

Please note: the readings listed under “further readings” are *not* required. They are there only for students that are interested in learning more about the topics.
The following books are required for this course. They can be purchased at the NYU bookstore:


All readings that are not in books for purchase will be available on Blackboard for personal use only.

**Office Hours**

Professor Tucker will hold office hours on Mondays from 10:30 – 12:00 in his office in 19 West 4th Street, 4th Floor, Rm. 430. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of the scheduled office hours, please email Professor Tucker directly.

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**Monday, January 24th: Introduction**

Readings: None

**PART I: SETTING THE STAGE**

**January 26, 31: Electoral Systems**


February 2, 7: Party Systems


Mair, Peter, ed. The West European Party System, Oxford Press 1990: Ch. 3 (37-45) 5 (50-60) 20, 21, 22 (285-310)

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PART II: HOW DO PEOPLE VOTE?

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Feb. 9, 14: A Sociological Approach to Voting


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February 21: No class

February 23: Methodological Interlude: A Brief Guide to Reading Quantitative Work


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Feb 16, 28: A Rational Approach to Voting


Further Reading:

Downs, Anthony (1957): Rest of the book.


March 2: Retrospective Voting

Fiorina, Morris P (1981), *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. Chapters 1, 2, 6, 8, 10 (3-43, 106-129, 155-175, 193-212)


Further Reading


March 7th: Review Session / Catch-up Session

March 9th: In Class Mid-Term

March 14, 16: Spring Break
March 21, 23: Strategic Voting


(Note: don’t worry about the details of the model – try to get the basic insight of how authors think about strategic voting, and how it may differ from Cox’s conception of strategic voting)

PART III: ECONOMIC VOTING

March 28, 30: Economic Voting in the United States


Further Reading:


April 4, 6, 11: Economic Voting Beyond the United States and “Conditional Economic Voting”


Tucker, Joshua A. 2006. Regional Economic Voting: Russia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, 1990-99. New York: Cambridge University Press. Read Chapters 1, 2, 8, 9; skim 5, 6, 7; If curious about statistical method, read first half of chapter 4, although this is not required. If interested in background on elections, read ch.3.

Further Reading:


Duch, Raymond and Randy Stevenson, 2008, The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results,. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Ch.1-3, 5)


PART IV: TOPICS IN THE STUDY OF ELECTIONS

April 13, 18: Turnout

Dalton, 2008, Ch.4 “Who Participates?”, 57-76.


Further Reading:


April 20, 25: Partisan Identification


Further Reading:


NOTE: Paper Topic Assignment Handed out in Class on April 25th.
April 27: Elections and Corruption


PART V: CASE STUDIES


*NOTE: Paper due at the START of Class on May 2nd.*

May 4th: Case Study #2: 1995-1996 Russian Parliamentary and Presidential Elections


Tucker, 2006, Chapter 4, p.131-144

May 9th: Case Study #3: the 2000 US Elections & Course Wrap Up