

# The Electoral Process

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## Professor Mario Guerrero

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*Classroom:* 5-262

*Time:* MWF 11:45AM - 12:50PM

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*Office Hours:* MW 10:30 - 11:30AM

Th 11:00AM - 12:00PM; 1:00 - 2:00PM; by appt

## 1 Course Description

The United States electoral process is a complex and dynamic system. In US elections, candidates from two major political parties appeal to voters in an attempt to win political offices, including a majority of seats in the national legislature and the White House. This course will examine election and campaign dynamics within the framework of the 2016 presidential election. In many ways, the 2016 presidential election is the basis for state and local elections. The rules of the election process determines how voters, candidates, and other actors react in a sometimes tumultuous atmosphere. Attention will focus on voting behavior, campaign processes, campaign finance, media communication, and electoral reform. The course will also place the contemporary election in comparative perspective to earlier and future elections. By the end of the course, students will be able to understand and assess the history and structure of elections, the motivations and psychology of voters, and the exogenous forces that can affect political behavior.

## 2 Required Text

In an effort to save you money, there are no textbooks or printed reader for this course. All required readings will be found online. Please visit the course website for frequent updates. If you have trouble with accessing course materials or prefer printed readings, please contact me to make alternate arrangements.

## 3 Course Requirements

This class is comprised of five components, designed to give a fair and comprehensive assessment of your progress in this course.

Percentage	Assignment
15%	<i>Panel:</i> Students will be required to participate in a 20-minute panel discussion of recent election events.
15%	<i>Blog Post:</i> Students will report on a newsworthy item, complete with analysis and commentary, to be posted online at a pre-determined, scheduled time.
20%	<i>Midterm Exam:</i> The midterm is a short answer and multiple choice exam. The midterm is on <b>Friday, October 28</b> (Week 5).
20%	<i>Paper:</i> Students will be required to synthesize the course material in a 7-10 page paper. The topic will be handed out on Friday, October 28. The paper is due <b>Wednesday, November 23</b> (Week 9).
30%	<i>Final Exam:</i> The final exam is a short answer and multiple choice exam and is cumulative. The final is on <b>Friday, December 9</b> .

## 4 Communication

Office hours are great for getting detailed answers and clarification. I encourage **every-one** to come to office hours at some point in the quarter. It will help me to get to know you better and it will help you do well in this class. Office hours have been statistically proven to help your grade.

### 4.1 Methods of Communication

Whenever I am in my office (94-316), I am happy to meet with you. I am guaranteed to be in my office during dedicated office hours, but you can also schedule an appointment so we can meet when it is convenient for you. Feel free to contact me online via Facebook chat (marioguerrero), Snapchat (BrofessorMario), or even gchat (mariog). I am frequently online and will be happy to answer your questions whenever I can.

## 5 Academic Honesty

Cal Poly Pomona takes academic honesty very seriously. Cheating is not tolerated and students will be held accountable for cheating on an assignment or an exam. Violators will receive an F in the course and then be referred to the Dean of Students and Judicial Affairs for further disciplinary action that may result in suspension. There should be no reason for you to feel compelled to cheat in this class. If you feel overwhelmed with the course, please do not hesitate to contact me for help.

## 6 Special Assistance

A wide range of services is available to support students in their efforts to meet the course requirements. Cal Poly Pomona offers counseling for personal and academic concerns at

the Counseling and Psychological Services at no additional charge to students (Building 66-110, 909-869-3220). Additionally, Student Health Mental Services (Building 46, 909-869-3070) provides a range of services to help students identify and overcome obstacles stemming from financial, emotional, social, or family situations. The Disability Resource Center (Building 9-103, 909-869-3333) also provides academic support services to eligible students with temporary and permanent disabilities. You must register with DRC prior to receiving these accommodations.

Separately from these services, the University Writing Center (Library 2921) provides assistance to students writing papers. The Writing Center offers students 30-minute one-on-one appointments. Writing Center tutors specialize in reading for content, but will also read papers for grammar and style. Please utilize this resource if you know you need help with your writing.

## 7 Course Schedule

Please note that the following schedule is subject to change throughout the quarter.

### 0 COURSE INTRODUCTION

**Friday, September 23, 2016** Course overview. Why do we vote? Why study elections? What is voting behavior?

*Readings* No Readings

### 1 RULES OF THE GAME AND THEORY

**Monday, September 26, 2016** The basics of the electoral process.

*Readings* Lowi T.J., B. Ginsberg, and K.A. Shepsle. 2008. *American Government*. New York: WW Norton, Chapter 10.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26: PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE #1, 5:30PM

**Wednesday, September 28, 2016** Direct Control of Elections. What is indirect control? What is direct control? What is the role of public opinion?

*Readings* Lederman, S. 1968. "The Ballot in Political Theory" in *Elections in America: Control and Influence in American Politics*, ed. Gerald M. Pomper. New York: Prentice Hall.

**Friday, September 30, 2016** Elections as instruments of democracy. Who participates? How can citizens influence the democratic process?

*Readings* Blais, A. 2007. "Turnout in elections." *Oxford handbook of political behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## 2 THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

**Monday, October 3, 2016** The Road to 2016. Who are the major candidates for president? Who is Hillary Clinton? Who is Donald Trump?

*Readings* Nelson, L. and T. Clark. 2015. "Donald Trump's 2016 presidential run, explained." *Vox.com*, 26 August.  
Allen, J. 2015. "The 11 moments that define Hillary Clinton." *Vox.com*, 15 June.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4: VICE-PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE, 5:30PM

**Wednesday, October 5, 2016** The Primary Election. How do primary elections work? How did the 2016 presidential primaries play out?

*Readings* Martin, J. and P. Healy. 2016. "Donald Trump All but Clinches G.O.P. Race with Indiana Win; Ted Cruz Quits." *New York Times*, 3 May.  
Chozick, A. 2016. "Hillary Clinton's Long, Grueling Quest." *New York Times*, 7 June.

**Friday, October 7, 2016** The Electoral College. How will the president be elected in November? Is the Electoral College the best way to elect a president?

*Readings* Noah, T. 2004. "America's Worst College, parts I-IV." *Slate.com*  
Gregg, G. 2004. "The Electoral College is Good for America, parts I-III." *National Review*.

## 3 MODELS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR: PART I

**Monday, October 10, 2016** Voting Behavior. Why do people vote the way do they do? How have political scientists answered this question?

*Readings* Bartels, L. 2010. "The study of electoral behavior." *Oxford handbook of American elections and political behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Wednesday, October 12, 2016** The Columbia School. What is the earliest research on voting? How important are social forces in your vote?

*Readings* Berelson, B., P. Lazarsfeld and W. McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

**Friday, October 14, 2016** The Columbia School. How does identifying with social groups determine your vote? What does the Columbia Model look like in practice?

*Readings* Janowitz, M. and W. Miller. 1952. "The Index of Political Predisposition in the 1948 Election." *Journal of Politics* 14: 710-727.

#### 4 MODELS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR: PART II

**Monday, October 17, 2016** The Michigan School. What is the major improvement made on the initial Columbia studies? What role does psychology play in the process of voting?

*Readings* Campbell, A., P. Converse, W. Miller, and D. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

**Wednesday, October 19, 2016** Rational Choice. Is it possible to model individual's preferences? How do campaigns respond to individual preferences?

*Readings* Downs, A. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19: PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE #2, 5:30PM

**Friday, October 21, 2016** Retrospective Voting. Do voters look to their past experiences when casting a vote for politicians? What does retrospective voting tell us about who wins an election?

*Readings* Irwin, N. 2015. "Forecasters Expect a Strong Economy for the 2016 Presidential Election." *New York Times*, 18 July.

#### 5 MODELS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR: PART III

**Monday, October 24, 2016** Voting Behavior. How can political science research in voting behavior be succinctly summarized? Can we see these theories at work in contemporary elections?

*Readings* Bartlett, B. 2015. "Donald Trump doesn't need Latino voters to win." *The Washington Post*. 4 September.

Brown, E.N. 2014. "Blog Post: The Democratic Party Has Become So Useless It's Making Young Liberals Look Longingly at Rand Paul." *Reason.com*. 17 November.

O'Connor, P. and J. Hook. 2015. "Splits Plague Both Parties as Fall Primary Campaign Starts." *The Wall Street Journal*. 7 September.

**Wednesday, October 26, 2016** Catch-up

*Readings* No Readings

**Friday, October 28, 2016 Midterm**

*Readings* No Readings

6 THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PREFERENCES

**Monday, October 31, 2016** Political Opinions. What and how is an opinion formed? What is socialization?

*Readings* Jennings, M.K, L. Stoker, and J. Bowers. 2009. "Politics across generations: Family transmission reexamined." *Journal of Politics* 71(3): 782-799.

**Wednesday, November 2, 2016** Opinion Stability. How do people hold opinions over time? Why do people change their opinions?

*Readings* J. Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.

**Friday, November 4, 2016** Political Knowledge. What do Americans know about politics? What are the ramifications for political knowledge in politics?

*Readings* PEW Center. 2007. "Public Knowledge of Current Affairs Little Changed by News and Information Revolutions: What Americans Know: 1989-2007." April 15.

7 ELECTION WEEK

**Monday, November 7, 2016** The Day Before The Election. What are the issues of importance to you? What are the candidate's issue positions?

*Readings* No Reading

**Wednesday, November 9, 2016** Election post-mortem. Who won and why? What are potential ramifications of the win?

*Readings* No Reading

**Friday, November 11, 2016 Veteran's Day - No Class.**

*Readings* No Reading

8 VOTERS & POLITICAL PARTIES

**Monday, November 14, 2016** Campaign Finance. Who pays for campaigns? How does money change the landscape of elections?

*Readings* Francia, P.L., W. Joe, and C. Wilcox. 2013. "Campaign Finance Reform in the Post-Citizens United Era." in *Campaigns on the Cutting Edge* Los Angeles: Sage Press.

**Wednesday, November 16, 2016** Political Parties. Why are political parties important to American politics? What role does the party play in elections?

*Readings* Aldrich, J. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 2.

**Friday, November 18, 2016** Interest Groups. What are party networks? How do interest group influences overtake individual voter preferences?

*Readings* Bawn, K., D. Karol, S. Masket, H. Noel, and J. Zaller. 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3): 571-597.

## 9 CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA

**Monday, November 21, 2016** New Media. How is communication in elections changing? How do campaigns and voters utilize online social networking sites?

*Readings* "Communicating and Electing" in *Communication in US Elections: New Agendas*, eds. R. Hart and D. Shaw. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.  
Conroy, M., J. Feezell, and M. Guerrero. 2012. "Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement." *Computers in Human Behavior* 28(5): 1535-1546.

**Wednesday, November 23, 2016** Malaise. What role should the media play in democratic society? Is the media responsible for the malaise in civic society?

*Readings* Norris, P. 2004. *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communication in Post-Industrial Democracies*. Cambridge University Press.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23: PAPER DUE

**Friday, November 25, 2016** Thanksgiving Holiday - No Class.

*Readings* No Readings

## 10 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES & ELECTORAL REFORM

**Monday, November 28, 2016** Race & Gender in Elections. What barriers have ethnic and racial minorities faced in elections? Why are women at a disadvantage when running for office? How do voters treat candidates from different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

*Readings* Terkildsen, N. 1993. "When White Voters Evaluate Black Candidates: The Processing Implications of Skin Color, Prejudice, and Self-Monitoring." *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4): 1032-1053.

**Wednesday, November 30, 2016** Representation. Do politicians respond to the policy preferences of the American public? Can and should we reform the Electoral College in order to implement direct control?

*Readings* Page, B.J. and R.Y. Shapiro. 1983. "Effects of public opinion on policy." *American Political Science Review* 77: 175-190.

Koza, J, et. al. 2006. "Three Previously Proposed Federal Constitutional Amendments." *Every Vote Equal: A State-Based Plan for Electing the President by National Popular Vote*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

**Friday, December 2, 2016** Course Conclusion.

*Readings* No Readings

FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 11:30AM - 1:30PM