

Voting and Elections in the United States

Dr. Mario Guerrero

E-mail: mag@cpp.edu

Voice: (909) 869-3885

Classroom: 5-138

Time: MW 11:30AM - 12:45PM

@marioguerrero

WWW: <http://marioguerrero.info/courses/pls4211>

Facebook: marioguerrero

Office: 94-316

Office Hours: MTuW 1:00 - 2:30PM
and by appointment

1 Course Description

Voting and elections are complex and dynamic processes. In the United States, candidates from two major political parties appeal to voters in an attempt to win political office, including the White House, a majority of seats in the national legislature, and offices at the state/local levels. This course will examine election and voting dynamics mostly within the framework of US presidential elections. In many ways, the rules of our presidential election serve as the basis for those of state and local elections. Rules determine 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 most recent presidential 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 Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the theoretical underpinnings of United States elections.
2. Identify the basic theories of voting behavior in the United States.
3. Analyze how group structures create electoral deficiencies in United States elections.
4. Deduce how electoral deficiencies create problems within a democracy.

5. Predict how the United States may respond to address electoral deficiencies.

Elections are the cornerstone of a democratic government. This class encourages students to think critically about electoral institutions in this country, but also about behavioral processes which are the driving force within any given election.

3 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.

4 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>Research:</i> Students will be required to participate in the research and discussion of a GOTV event.
15%	<i>Midterm 1:</i> The midterm is a short answer and multiple choice exam. The midterm is on Monday, October 1 (Week 6).
15%	<i>Midterm 2:</i> The midterm is a short answer and multiple choice exam. The midterm is on Monday, November 5 (Week 11).
25%	<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 Monday, October 29. The paper is due Wednesday, November 14 (Week 12).
30%	<i>Final Exam:</i> The final exam is a short answer and multiple choice exam and is cumulative. The final is on Monday, December 10 .

5 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 semester. 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.

5.1 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). I am frequently online and will be happy to answer your questions whenever I can.

6 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.

7 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.

8 Course Schedule

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

1 COURSE INTRODUCTION

Monday, August 27, 2018 Course overview. Why do we vote? Why study elections? What is voting behavior?

Readings No Readings

Wednesday, August 29, 2018 No class. American Political Science Association Conference.

Readings No Readings

2 THE BASICS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Monday, September 3, 2018 No class. Labor Day Holiday.

Readings No Readings

Wednesday, September 5, 2018 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.

3 ELECTIONS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DEMOCRACY

Monday, September 10, 2018 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.

Wednesday, September 12, 2018 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.

4 LEARNING FROM 2016

Monday, September 17, 2018 The Road to 2016. Who were 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.

Wednesday, September 19, 2018 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.

5 HOW DOES VOTING WORK?

Monday, September 24, 2018 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*.

Wednesday, September 26, 2018 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.

6 THE FIRST MIDTERM

Monday, October 1, 2018 Midterm #1

Readings No Readings

Wednesday, October 3, 2018 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.

7 MODELS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR

Monday, October 8, 2018 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.

Wednesday, October 10, 2018 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.

8 MODELS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR: PART II

Monday, October 15, 2018 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 17, 2018 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.

9 WHAT IS AN OPINION?

Monday, October 22, 2018 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 24, 2018 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.

10 WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT POLITICS?

Monday, October 29, 2018 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.

Wednesday, October 31, 2018 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.

11 THE SECOND MIDTERM

Monday, November 5, 2018 Midterm #2

Readings No Readings

Wednesday, November 7, 2018 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.

12 POLITICAL PARTIES: HINDERING DEMOCRACY?

Monday, November 12, 2018 No class. Labor Day Holiday.

Readings No Readings

Wednesday, November 14, 2018 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.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14: PAPER DUE

13 THE NEW FRONTIER OF ELECTIONS

Monday, November 19, 2018 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.

Wednesday, November 21, 2018 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.

14 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ELECTIONS

Monday, November 26, 2018 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 28, 2018 Race in Elections. What barriers have ethnic and racial minorities faced in elections? 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.

15 COURSE CONCLUSION

Monday, December 3, 2018 Gender in Elections. Why are women at a disadvantage when running for office? How do women react differently than men as voters?

Readings Conroy, M., et. al. 2015. "From Ferraro to Palin: Sexism in coverage of vice-presidential candidates in old and new media." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3(4): 573-591.

Wednesday, December 5, 2018 Course Conclusion.

Readings No Readings

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 11:00AM - 12:50PM