

The Electoral Process

Dr. Mario Guerrero

E-mail: mag@cpp.edu

Voice: (909) 869-3885

Classroom: 5-262

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

@marioguerrero

WWW: <http://marioguerrero.info/courses/pls321>

Facebook: marioguerrero

Office: 94-316

Office Hours: MW 1:00 - 2:00PM

F 1:00 - 3:00PM and by appointment

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, presidential elections are 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 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>Panel:</i> Students will be required to participate in a 20-minute panel discussion of recent election events.
15%	<i>Midterm 1:</i> The midterm is a short answer and multiple choice exam. The midterm is on Wednesday, October 11 (Week 3).
15%	<i>Midterm 2:</i> The midterm is a short answer and multiple choice exam. The midterm is on Friday, November 3 (Week 6).
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 Friday, October 27. The paper is due Wednesday, November 22 (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 Friday, December 8 .

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 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.

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), Snapchat (BrofessorMario), or even gchat (mariog). 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 quarter.

0 COURSE INTRODUCTION

Friday, September 22, 2017 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 25, 2017 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.

Wednesday, September 27, 2017 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 29, 2017 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 2, 2017 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, October 4, 2017 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 6, 2017 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 9, 2017 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 11, 2017 Midterm #1

Readings No Readings

Wednesday, October 13, 2017 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.

4 MODELS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR: PART II

Monday, October 16, 2017 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 18, 2017 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.

Friday, October 20, 2017 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.

5 MODELS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR: PART III

Monday, October 23, 2017 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.

Wednesday, October 25, 2017 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.

Friday, October 27, 2017 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.

6 THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PREFERENCES

Monday, October 30, 2017 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, November 1, 2017 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.

Friday, November 3, 2017 Midterm #2

Readings No Readings

7 THE DARK SIDE OF ELECTIONS

Monday, November 6, 2017 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 8, 2017 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 10, 2017 Veteran's Day - No Class.

Readings No Reading

8 THE NEW FRONTIER OF ELECTIONS

Monday, November 13, 2017 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 15, 2017 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 17, 2017 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.

9 IDENTITY IN ELECTIONS

Monday, November 20, 2017 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.

Wednesday, November 22, 2017 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, NOVEMBER 22: PAPER DUE

Friday, November 24, 2017 Thanksgiving Holiday - No Class.

Readings No Readings

10 REPRESENTATION & ELECTORAL REFORM

Monday, November 27, 2017 Representation. Do politicians respond to the policy preferences of the American public? Does democratic representation work?

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

Wednesday, November 29, 2017 Reform. Can and should we reform elections in order to implement direct control? What do attempts to reform the American electoral system look like?

Readings 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 1, 2017 Course Conclusion.

Readings No Readings

FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 11:30AM - 1:30PM