



POLS 3520: Voting and Participation in America

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Megan Ruxton

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(Responses to email will be provided within 36 hours during weekdays.)

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

For questions about the class material, assignments etc., you may reach me at the email address listed above. Emails sent after 8:00 p.m. Mountain Standard time (MST) will not be looked at until at least 8:00 a.m. the following day.

Office Hours: To further assist students with any questions and concerns they may have, I will hold Skype office hours every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (MST), or by appointment as needed. My Skype username is [meganruxton](#). Students should feel free to call in during that time to discuss any questions or concerns. If you are not able to use Skype, please let me know and we can make alternative arrangements. Emails sent during that time will also receive rapid responses.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The role of the citizen in the electoral and political process is the cornerstone of America's representative democracy. Voting and participation are indelibly linked to political parties and elections, and so this course takes a wide lens to examine how each of these concepts is intertwined. In this course, we will examine why and how individuals choose to engage in political participation and voting. We will also consider the opposite side of this coin by examining U.S. political parties and their role in elections at the local, state and national levels. We will explore the underlying questions regarding citizen participation in a democratic system, such as: Why do people vote, and why do they vote the way they do? Why do we have a two-party system? What other institutions (such as the media) play a role in the process of voting, elections and representation, and how? What role does money play, particularly the way we regulate campaign finance? How fair are our elections, and what might we do to improve them? The course begins with an introduction to our electoral system, including parties, moves on to partisanship in the electorate along with concepts specifically regarding participation and voting, and ends with issues of representation.

COURSE GOALS

This course is designed to provide you with the skills to achieve the following: 1) Understand and

apply the key debates and theories about the roles and possibilities surrounding political participation, voting, political parties, and elections in the U.S.; 2) Understand the key debates, current trends, and issues in our electoral system, as well as the tradeoffs and problems inherent in the system; 3); Understand the key actors and their interactions in key policy debates and 4) Critically evaluate parties and elections as linkage institutions connecting the mass public with the democratic process.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 2017. *Party Politics in America*. Seventeenth Edition. (ISBN: 1-138-68368-6)

Conway, M. Margaret. 2000. *Political Participation in the United States*. Third Edition. (ISBN: 0-87187-792-9)

- These books are available at the UW bookstore on campus or through their online purchasing system. They are also available through Amazon and other major book retailers.

OTHER REQUIRED OR SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Available via Canvas (purchase not required): Adkins, Randall E. 2008. *The Evolution of Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections: Landmark Documents, 1787 – 2007*.

CURRENT EVENTS – It is highly recommended that all students keep up on current events as they relate to the course material. It is recommended students consult inter/national news outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *BBC*, etc. An additional resource is *The Hotline* by National Journal. An awareness of current events will be helpful for assignments throughout the semester.

ANY OTHER ASSIGNED READINGS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED VIA CANVAS

COURSE PRESENTATION AND PROCEDURES

Organization of content: There will be 16 modules total, one for each week of class material. Because the semester begins on Wednesday, August 30 and ends on Tuesday, December 19, each module week will be considered as Wednesday through Tuesday. Modules will be comprised of readings, videos, learning activities and graded assignments. Students should proceed by completing all the tasks in any given module each week before moving to the next module. If students complete a module early, they may work one module ahead but not more than that.

CREDIT/CLOCK HOURS

Contact Hours per week: 3

Please note: In compliance with state and federal credit hour requirements, students should expect to do at least 2 hours of work outside of class for every hour of lecture.

GRADING

As a student enrolled in this course, one of your responsibilities is to submit course work by the due dates listed in the Course Schedule. With that said, I take my role as your instructor very seriously, and I care about how well you do in this course and that you have a satisfying, rewarding experience.

To that end, it is my commitment to you to respond individually to the work you submit in this class and to return your work in a timely manner. Smaller, weekly assignments will be returned within **5** business days and major assignments along with the exams will be returned within **10** business days. (If, however, due to unforeseeable circumstances, the grading of your work takes longer than the times I have listed here, I will keep you informed of my progress and make every effort to return your work with feedback as soon as I can.)

Assignment*	Grade Points	Grade Percentage
Weekly journal assignment	100	20
Midterm exam	100	25
Final exam	100	25
Final research paper	100	30
Total	400	100

*Keep a copy of all work created for the course, including work submitted through the Banner course learning management system.

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Weekly Journal Entries: Students are required to keep a detailed journal which responds to the week's readings and PowerPoint lectures. These entries should engage the key points from the week's reading assignment, any surprising concepts or facts, and if applicable, discuss how it fits with the content presented in other readings. Journal entries should be done on a weekly basis, submitted to Banner by 11:59 pm (MT) each Tuesday, and should be no shorter than 350 words per entry. Students will be graded for relevancy and use of class material, with each journal entry worth up to 10 points, for a total of 100 points over the course of the semester. **

****Note: There will not be journal entries due the weeks that exams are given, or when each of the four paper components are due (details on this below).**

OPTIONS FOR EXAM PROCTORING

While proctoring will not be required for this course, I expect that students take the exam the way they would if they were taking the exam in person: **no notes, books, or any other source (on or offline) may be used.** Exams will be timed to deter students from utilizing other sources. Students will have 60 minutes for the midterm, and 120 minutes for the final. Exams must be completed by **11:59 pm (MT) the Tuesday of the week it is given (the last day of the module).** Failure to take the exam by the time that week's module closes will result in a zero being assigned for the exam.

GRADE DESCRIPTION

All assignments are designed to help us accomplish the course objectives and will be done through completion of assigned readings, class participation, completion of a paper, and two exams. Each is discussed below:

Participation—20%: Participating in class is a crucial aspect of accomplishing course objectives; therefore, participation through weekly written assignments in the form of journal entries is mandatory. It is through these that students' participation will be assessed. Throughout the semester, students will have one "pass," or one instance where failure to turn in their journal entry will not affect their participation score.

Midterm Exam—25%: There will be one midterm exam worth 25% of your total grade. This test will cover all material for the class up to that date. The exact format will be announced at least one week prior to the exam, but could consist of multiple choice, short answer or essay questions.

Final Exam—25%: The final exam will be similar in format to the midterm exam, also worth 25% of your total grade. The exact format will be announced at least one week prior to the exam, and may consist of multiple choice, short answer or essay questions. The final exam is cumulative, and will cover material from the entirety of the semester.

Research paper—30%: Students are required to write a 12-15 page **original** research paper on a topic of their choosing, *which will be completed as a series of four short written assignments* (25 points per component) that will add up to one longer paper by the end of the semester. See additional handout for details. Students cannot submit their paper via email, papers must be turned in by the deadline on the Banner system. Late papers will be docked points per the late policy described below.

Grading Scale:

All assignments as well as the final grade will be based on the following scale:

93 - 100 = **A**

90 - 92.9 = **A-**

86 - 89.99 = **B+**

83 - 85.9 = **B**

80 - 82.99 = **B-**

70 - 79.9 = **C**

60 - 69.9 = **D**

0 - 59.9 = **F**

MAKE UP POLICY

Assignments must be turned in on Banner by 11:59 pm (MT) on the day the assignment is due. Assignments not turned in **by 11:59 pm Mountain Time** will be counted as late.

The only excuses that will be counted as acceptable for turning in late assignments or taking an exam outside of the scheduled time are university excused events, severe illness, death in the

family or other such emergencies. These will only be excused with official documentation presented to the instructor (i.e. a doctor's note excusing you on the day an assignment is due or a test is given). Any other reasons for late assignments or missed exams will be penalized. Late assignments will be docked 10% for each day they are late (including weekends). **Anything after the 4th day of the original due date will not be accepted.** In other words, once 50% of the original paper grade is docked, papers will not be accepted. If you foresee a problem meeting a deadline for *any* reason, notify me immediately and for all *reasonable* requests I will do what I can to assist you.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

This course will adhere to the *highest* levels of academic integrity. It is the responsibility of the student to know and understand what constitutes a violation of these standards.

Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one's own work. Violations of the university's academic integrity standards include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating—includes using unauthorized sources of information and providing or receiving unauthorized assistance on any form of academic work or engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by the faculty member.
- Plagiarism—includes the copying of language, structure, ideas, or thoughts of another, and representing them as one's own without proper acknowledgment.
- Unauthorized Possession or Disposition of Academic Materials—includes the unauthorized selling or purchasing of examinations or other academic work; stealing another student's work; unauthorized entry to or use of material in a computer file; and using information from or possessing exams that an instructor did not authorize for release to students.
- Falsification—includes any untruth, either verbal or written, in one's academic work.
- Facilitation—includes knowingly assisting another to commit an act of academic misconduct.

If any student is found violating these standards, *they will at minimum receive a failing grade for the assignment/exam on which they have been caught in violation*, and will immediately be reported to the Chair of the Department of Political Science for further consideration of penalties, which may include a failing grade in the class, suspension or expulsion.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions will be as inclusive as possible. *Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others carefully are crucial to universal learning.*

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

It is University of Wyoming policy to accommodate students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities. If you have a physical, learning, sensory, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. You will need to register with University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in the Student Educational Opportunity offices, Room 330 Knight Hall, and provide UDSS with documentation of your disability.

TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

Having trouble with the multimedia in this course? See the solutions below. Also, it is highly recommended that you access your course via a **high-speed Internet connection**.

- Problems with opening PDFs?
 - Download [Adobe Reader](#).
- YouTube videos not playing?
 - Download [Flash Player](#).
- Videos not opening or playing on your Mac?
 - Download [Windows Media Components for QuickTime](#).

You must have speakers installed and working properly on your computer before beginning the course. You may need access to Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and/or Excel to complete assignments.

THIRD-PARTY TOOLS/PRIVACY

Please note that this course may require you to use third-party tools (tools outside of the Canvas learning management system), such as Skype, Educreation, Google Hangouts and others. Some of these tools may collect and share information about their users. Because your privacy is important, you are encouraged to consult the privacy policies for any third-party tools in this course so that you are aware of how your personal information is collected, used and shared.

COPYRIGHTED COURSE MATERIALS

Please do not share material from this course in online, print, or other media. Course material is the property of the instructor who developed the course. Materials authored by third parties and used in the course are also subject to copyright protections. Posting course materials on external sites (commercial or not) violates copyright law. Students who share course content without the instructor's express permission, including with online sites that post materials to sell to other students, could face appropriate disciplinary or legal action.

SUGGESTED STUDY METHODS

Online education requires skills and habits that may be less essential in traditional courses. In order

to be successful in your online course you will need:

- Space—Establish a comfortable and well-organized physical workplace.
- Time management skills—Set personal study and "classroom" time as you would do for a traditional course.
- Organization skills—Print out all class material (modules, PowerPoints, assignments, additional resources, and any work you generate) and keep everything in a single location. Maintain electronic backups of all class materials.
- Communication skills—Demonstrate a willingness to interact with your instructor and classmates through email, phone calls, discussion boards, and active participation in all class activities.
- Initiative—Seek help from your instructor and classmates, ask questions as they arise.
- Discipline—Pace yourself, complete all activities and assignments before the due date, follow through on all class requirements to completion.

The more closely you adhere to the recommendations above the greater your chances of having a successful semester and a rewarding online experience.

Tentative Course Schedule

Module and Dates	Topic	Assigned Reading	Journal entry due?
1 – Aug 30 – Sept 5	Syllabus review, introduction to course; Introduction to Parties, Elections and Participation	Hershey Ch 1; Wayne Ch 1	Yes
2 – Sept 6 – 12	Introduction to Parties, Elections and Participation	Hershey Ch 2; Adkins Ch 2, 7	Yes
3 – Sept 13 – 19	Party as Organization	Hershey Ch 3, 4; Conway Ch 1	Yes
4 – Sept 20 – 26	Party as Organization	Hershey Ch 5; Conway Ch 2, 3	Yes
5 – Sept 27 – Oct 3	Party in the Electorate	Hershey Ch 6, 7	Yes
6 – Oct 4 – 10	Party in the Electorate; First paper component due	Hershey Ch 8; Conway 5; Adkins Ch 13, 39	No
7 – Oct 11 – 17	Party in the Electorate	Conway Ch 6, 7, 8	Yes
8 – Oct 18 – 24	MIDTERM EXAM	None	No
9 – Oct 25 – 31	Nominations, General Campaign	Hershey Ch 9, 10; Adkins Ch 9, 23	Yes
10 – Nov 1 – Nov 7	Nominations, General Campaign; Second paper component due	Hershey Ch 11; Adkins Ch 40, 45, 50	No
11 – Nov 8 – 14	Campaign Finance	Hershey Ch 12; Wayne Ch 4; Adkins Ch 34, 41, 47	Yes
12 – Nov 15 – 21	Party in Government; Third paper component due	Hershey Ch 13; Adkins Ch 34	No
FALL BREAK – NO CLASSES NOVEMBER 22-24			
13 – Nov 22 – Nov 28	Party in Government	Hershey Ch 14, 15; Adkins Ch 41, 47	Yes
14 – Nov 29 – Dec 5	Parties and the Press; FULL RESEARCH PAPER DUE	Wayne Ch 5, 8; Adkins Ch 38	No
15 – Dec 6 – Dec 12	Conclusion and Wrap-up	Hershey Ch 16	Yes
16 – Dec 13 – Dec 19	FINAL EXAM	None	No