

# FWS: WRITING ELECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

GOVT 1101

Ives Hall 108

Harry Dienes

Zoom: [link for office hours](#).

Email: [hjd45@cornell.edu](mailto:hjd45@cornell.edu).

Office Hours: Friday, 2:30 PM-4:00 PM.

- Either in person in White Hall B13, or through Zoom.
- Please sign up for office hours at <https://calendly.com/harrydienes>.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Elections are the cornerstone of power in the 96 democracies of the world – and vital to many non-democratic countries, offering both moments of uncertainty for rulers as well as being a tool used by them to retain power. But what do elections do? How do they relate to democracy? Do they improve responsiveness, increasing public services and economic growth? This course will start by thinking about these big questions, before drilling down into the details of how elections happen, both ‘in theory’ and what happens in the shadows, considering clientelism, vote buying, and intimidation. Finally the course will facilitate you to learn, interpret, and communicate about one of the elections happening around the world right now.

This course will examine elections across the world going on in real time. Want to know how to understand these pivotal moments, and how to write and communicate what they mean for their respective countries? Want to develop skills in effective communication across a variety of writing and presentation types, drawing from journalism, think tank briefs, develop bank reports, blog posts, and podcasts – as well as academic articles? Want to learn concepts that you can apply to unfolding events, while going further to see broader implications for how the world works? Want to describe something that no one could know in advance, becoming an expert in real world events, in real time? This FWS will help develop these skills, improving writing and presenting skills both for your college career and beyond.

## ABOUT ME

Please call me Harry. I’m a scholar of comparative politics, with interests in electoral accountability, the politics of development, bureaucracy, and state capacity. I think about how states can become better at delivering services, how and why citizens make demands on government, and the political incentives that underpin those dynamics. I have experience as a civil servant in the UK and in Timor-Leste, (very briefly) as a local political candidate, and have area

interests in Southeast Asia and Ethiopia. I'm looking forward to doing this class with you, and have you teach about the events going on today!

#### LEARNING GOALS

Students will gain an introduction to comparative political science through thinking about one of the most important elements of politics – elections. While the topic is too vast to cover everything we want, we will develop a shared understanding of the key concepts to understand elections, wherever they happen. We will do so with a strong focus on writing as a skill in itself – one that enables clear communication, facilitates learning, and opens up strategies for effective impact in college and careers after. Writing is at the heart of government, law, consulting, and media; indeed, all aspects of public policy and life. To write well is a creative exercise, one we will use to explore some of the most important, enduring political questions, ones that links directly to urgent issues of policy and power.

#### Objectives:

- Become an expert on a 'future' current event – know more than most, if not all other people on campus.
- Articulate the uses and abuses of elections, and recognize them in real-world settings.
- Communicate complex situations with multiple issues clearly, for varied audiences.
- Gain familiarity with political science work on democracy and electoral autocracy.

#### Writing topics we will cover:

- “The basics” of how to write and craft essays, newspaper articles, policy advice, and other types of writing
- Presenting information to others verbally, in person
- Writing styles, audiences, and effective communication
- Reading through writing, note taking and arguing with texts
- Combining multiple sources into a coherent, personal thesis
- Being a Cornell student, including using Cornell's resources such as the library, writing emails, using office hours, citation management, and work-life balance as a student.
- Why there are no rules – you should forget the ones you've learnt – but some writing is better than others.

#### COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance.** Attendance is expected, and will help you develop the skills outlined in this syllabus. Attendance also requires your full participation as part of doing the class with others – you help others by contributing and sharing your thoughts. But I will not check attendance, and you will not lose points over it.

**Late Work.** Please say in advance if work will be late – this is good professional practice. 3 points will be deducted per 24 hours after the deadline. This is not a punitive penalty, but it does mean the best time for you to submit a piece of work after the deadline is always now.

**Electronics.** Electronics are welcomed, especially tablets that can be used to make notes with a pen. Pen and paper are tried and tested technologies, too.

**Grade appeals.** If there arises a circumstance in which you receive a grade on an assignment that is lower than you believe it should be, you are invited to appeal your grade. This may be done by sending me a written statement delineating your argument for a change in grade. I will review the original submission and consider the arguments in the appeal. An appeal does not guarantee a change and regrading may result in a lower grade if I find that the initial grade was overly generous following greater scrutiny.

**Extra credit (2 pts).** On the day we watch the in-class movie, post your short reflections on the film to Canvas and comment on another reflection. Meaningful engagement will be awarded with 1 extra point for your comment and your reply.

**Office hours.** Office hours are the time for you to ask questions about (and further discuss) course expectations and topics relevant to your study of the course material. Please sign up to office hours using the Calendly link at the top of this document. Note: all students are required to meet with me individually at least twice over the course of the semester.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

**Inclusiveness is a central value in the class.** If we act inclusively, our discussions, writing, listening, and knowledge growth will be set on firmer foundations. A consequence of an inclusive environment, when we all act with this value, is **a class welcoming of diversity**. I consider political science a discipline that can especially benefit from diverse experiences, and in turn help us to structure discussions about and with diversity.

From these considerations, I request that all students agree to act with inclusiveness with respect to me, classmates, and others. This does not mean we all agree; it does mean that we act respectful of others' contributions. We should be participating with sustained thought, a desire to learn from others, and to see our work not as being smarter or working harder than our peers, but in building a community of mutually beneficial relationships.

## REQUIRED BOOKS

There are no required books, and materials will be made available online. You may, however, chose to get some books for yourself. Two will be helpful for your studies in the writing component of this course.

- Oliver Kamm. 2016. *Accidence Will Happen*. Pegasus Books.
- Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein. “*They Say / I Say*”.

In addition, you may want to obtain a standard writing guide, from among the following. I don’t want you to take any of them as the truth, so while it may make sense to pick a recent version, in another sense it doesn’t matter. I put them in a rough order of preference. What is important is that you read and think about relevant parts of whichever book you have over the semester, and practice implementing advice. You will then get a feel for your own approach over time.

- Hjortshoj, Keith. *The Transition to College Writing*. Boston and New York: Bedford / St. Martins, 2009.
- Strunk and White. *The Elements of Style*.
- Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, 2021. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 13th edition.

#### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Each student is expected to:

- ***have read all the required readings and to be an active contributor to discussions.***
- ***be on time.*** Late arrivals are disruptive and disrespectful to everyone.
- ***engage thoughtfully, listen attentively, behave considerately and act professionally.*** Fruitful discussions and engagement with the course material can only occur if everyone comes to class prepared and I expect everyone to be able to participate in a meaningful manner.
- ***provide constructive, serious feedback.***

*Note: If you are uncomfortable speaking up in class, please come to office hours so we can discuss a possible solution. It is everyone’s responsibility to make the classroom a welcoming and tolerant space.*

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student in all academic undertakings. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. Academic integrity is expected not only in formal coursework situations, but in all University relationships and interactions connected to the educational process, including the use of University resources. A Cornell student’s submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student’s own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student’s academic position truthfully reported at all times.

All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another, and must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and

specifically acknowledged. Please read carefully Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity, which is contained in the *The Essential Guide to Academic Integrity at Cornell*. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an 'F' for the term.

For more details, please see:

<https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/dean/academic-integrity/code-of-academic-integrity/>

#### EVALUATIONS AND GRADING

Each student will be evaluated on assignments outlined in the table below. Note that these are mostly cumulative assignments, with your case study being made up of the components you have already written for previous assignments, with some additional work in combining them coherently.

Assignments are due at **11.59pm** on the day indicated.

Assignment	Weight	Deadline
Essay: What purpose do elections hold in democracies? What can go wrong?	5%	First Draft: September 1 <sup>st</sup>  Final Draft: September 7 <sup>th</sup>
Task: Selecting an election	2%	September 7 <sup>th</sup>
Project 1: Pre-election issues brief	10%	October 19 <sup>th</sup>
Project 2: Annotated bibliography	8%	October 31 <sup>st</sup>
Project 3: Post-election presentation and feedback	15%	November 14 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup>
Project 4: Post-election analysis	10%	November 19 <sup>th</sup>
Project 5: Full Case Study	30%	November 30 <sup>th</sup>
Portfolio Reflection	10%	December 12 <sup>th</sup>
Overall Participation	10%	N/A

We start the class assignments with two writing exercises based on theoretical literature from political science.

- The **short response paper** is very short – about three pages of writing maximum. This is designed to get you writing early, making the most of our time over the semester. You should combine *descriptive* and *argumentative* writing styles. The first draft and revised draft together make up 5 percentage points.

We then switch to an extended project – based on the election you will choose. These tasks will cumulate, until you have produced a full case study for the country of your choice.

- For **selecting an election**, you will need to look at the list of elections that are happening around the world during the semester that I provide and submit your choice on canvas. These will be elections that enable enough time for you to complete your assignments, so I will exclude those towards the end of the semester.
- The **pre-election brief** is a short guide to the election, outlining the main parties, the main election issues, and any salient point from the context, such as how competitive and free they are expected to be, outlook for violence, misinformation, or strong partisanship. You should be clear what kind of regime the country is – look up on VDEM. The brief should be about three pages double spaced.
- The **annotated bibliography** includes a citation list of the data sources, reports, and academic papers that you are using for your case study. Please use Zotero to generate the references to begin with!
- The **post election presentation** is an oral briefing to the class, imagining we are inside a State Department office. You are the officer in charge of covering your country, and are explaining what happened to colleagues in the office. You are also expected to provide **feedback** on other class members presentations.
- The **post-election analysis** should be in a blog or magazine article style. It explains the results, links to the pre-election concerns that you wrote about, and has reflections for the near future. It should also assess the results in a broader context. This will be a longer piece, of about five pages double spaced. I will provide feedback.
- The **full case study**. Combines the elements from the previous assignments. You should give a key takeaway or argument, as well as highlight the main issues for the election, describe the regime and how elections fit within that regime type, and think about the results, behavior of politicians, and the outlook for the future. Imagine your audience being a student who wants to know about this particular moment in history. It should be about 12 pages and will include material already written but re-edited for this purpose. Please also consider feedback you received from your presentation and written post-election analysis on how to make things clearer.
- The **reflection** is a chance for you to describe what you feel like you have learned, or how you have developed as a writer and communicator. You will be writing notes after

each assignment, so ideally, this will combine things you have already written. About three pages.

## WEEKLY TOPICS AND READINGS

### Week One

August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Introductions.

- Course material
- Overview of our elections this semester
- Syllabus and Policies

August 24<sup>th</sup>. What are elections for? Power transitions

- Schumpeter, Joseph A. 1942. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Chapters 21 (“The Classical Doctrine of Democracy”) and 22 (“Another Theory of Democracy”), pages 250-283.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/29/why-elections-are-bad-for-democracy>

### Week Two

August 29<sup>th</sup>. What are elections for? Representation & Accountability

*Writing topic: Emails and Communication.*

- Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin, eds. 1999. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Introduction & Chapter 1, pages 1-54.

#### Recommended:

- Fearon, James ‘Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance’ in Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin, eds. 1999. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Pages 55-97.

August 31<sup>st</sup>. No Class.

## Week Three

September 5<sup>th</sup>. Do elections make democracy?

- Schmitter, P.C., & Karl, T.L. (1991). What Democracy Is. . . and Is Not. *Journal of Democracy* 2(3), 75-88.
- Oliver Kamm. 2016. *Accidence Will Happen*. Pegasus Books. Intro + chapter 1.

September 7<sup>th</sup>. How do votes get counted? Electoral systems.

*Writing topic: Styles and Audiences*

- Gallagher, Michael, and Paul Mitchell, 'Introduction to Electoral Systems', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2005, pages 3-15). *NOTE: not whole chapter!*
- In-class presentation of VDEM Democracy Report.

## Week Four

September 12<sup>th</sup>. What do democratic elections do? Governance.

*Writing topic: Citations and referencing software.*

- Emmerson, D. (2012). Southeast Asia: Minding the Gap Between Democracy and Governance. *Journal of Democracy*, 23(2), 62-73.

September 14<sup>th</sup>. What do democratic elections do? Policy issues and voter-politician linkages.

- Bleck, J., & Van de Walle, N. (2018). Analyzing Issues in Presidential Campaigns. In *Electoral Politics in Africa since 1990: Continuity in Change* (pp. 185-217). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Week Five

September 19<sup>th</sup>. Library Resources with Lynn Titchenor

*We will be in Olin Library Classroom (106 G, just before the archway into the Kroch corridor).*

September 21<sup>st</sup>. Political Cleavages: Urban-Rural

- Robin Harding (2020). *Rural Democracy: Elections and Development in Africa*. Oxford. Chapters 1 and 2.



## Week Six

September 26<sup>th</sup>. Political Cleavages: Populism and Polarization

- Kenneth Roberts (2021). Populism and Polarization in Comparative Perspective: Constitutive, Spatial and Institutional Dimensions. *Government and Opposition*.

September 28<sup>th</sup>. What can go wrong? Clientelism and Coercion

- Auyero, J. (2000). The Logic of Clientelism in Argentina: An Ethnographic Account. *Latin American Research Review*, 35(3), 55–81
- Isabela Mares and Lauren E. Young (2019). *Conditionality & Coercion: Electoral clientelism in Eastern Europe*. Oxford. Chapter 1.

### Recommended:

- Edward Aspinall et al. 2022. *Mobilizing for Elections: Patronage and Political Machines in Southeast Asia*.

## Week Seven

October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Anticipating Elections

Writing topic: Reading for writing

- Dassonneville, R., & Tien, C. (2021). Introduction to Forecasting the 2020 US Elections. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(1), 47-51
- Enns, P., & Lagodny, J. (2021). Forecasting the 2020 Electoral College Winner: The State Presidential Approval/State Economy Model. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(1), 81-85.
- Dowding, K. (2021). Why Forecast? The Value of Forecasting to Political Science. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(1), 104-106
- Victor, J. (2021). Let's Be Honest about Election Forecasting. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(1), 107-110.
- Danielle Resnick (2021). African democracy in 2022: 3 elections to watch. *Brookings*.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/12/29/african-democracy-in-2022-3-elections-to-watch/>

October 5<sup>th</sup>. Guest speaker: Rob Cantelmo

## Week Eight

October 10<sup>th</sup>. No class – Fall Break.

October 12<sup>th</sup>. Why vote in (democratic) elections?

- Bensel, R. (2004). Introduction and Conclusion. *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (pp. 1-25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Week Nine

October 17<sup>th</sup>. Why vote in authoritarian elections?

- Letsa, N. (2020). Expressive Voting in Autocracies: A Theory of Non-Economic Participation with Evidence from Cameroon. *Perspectives on Politics*, 18(2), 439-453

October 19<sup>th</sup>. Why elections in authoritarian states?

- Morgenbesser, L. (2016) *Behind the Façade: Elections under Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia*. New York: SUNY Press. Ch. 1.
- Nic Cheeseman. “How do regimes continue to rig elections and get away with it?”  
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/quest/towards-a-better-society/democracy.aspx>

## Week Ten

October 24<sup>th</sup>. Are Elections Democratizing?

- Morgenbesser, L. and Pepinsky, T. (2016). Elections without democracy in Southeast Asia. *New Mandala*. <https://www.newmandala.org/elections-without-democracy-southeast-asia/>
- Miller, M. (2023). Elections in Hard Places. *Perspectives on Politics*, 21(2), 669-673. *This is a book review. I want you to think about how the book review is constructed; how ideas from the books’ authors are summarized, combined, and evaluated by Miller. What purpose does the book review structure hold?*

October 26<sup>th</sup>. Developing your research interest

## Week Eleven

October 31<sup>st</sup>. Library Workshop at Olin

November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Aftermath: Electoral Violence

*Writing topic: Giving Feedback*

- Toha, R. (2021). Introduction. In *Rioting for Representation: Local Ethnic Mobilization in Democratizing Countries* (pp. 1-11). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **Week Twelve**

November 7<sup>th</sup>. Interpreting Elections

- Meredith L. Weiss & Ibrahim Suffian (2023). Decline, Fall, and Resurrection of a Dominant-coalition System: Malaysia's Tortured Partisan Path. *Pacific Affairs*. Volume 96, Number 2, pp. 281-301(21).

November 9<sup>th</sup>. Guest Lecture: Elvin Ong

- Sebastian Dettman & Thomas B. Pepinsky (2023). Demographic structure and voting behaviour during democratization: evidence from Malaysia's 2022 election. *Democratization*.
- Steven Oliver and Kai Ostwald (2020). Singapore's Pandemic Election: Opposition Parties and Valence Politics in GE2020. *Pacific Affairs*. Volume 93, No. 4, pp. 759-780.

## **Week Thirteen**

November 14<sup>th</sup>. Class Presentations (1)

November 16<sup>th</sup>. Class Presentations (2)

## **Week Fourteen**

November 21<sup>st</sup>. Writing Clinic.

- Film and Extra credit.

November 23<sup>rd</sup>. No Class – Thanksgiving Break.