

Government 370L: The Politics of Voter Suppression (39130)

Department of Government
University of Texas at Austin
Fall 2021

TTH 9:30-11:00

Instructor: Bryan Jones

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Flags: The course carries writing and independent research flags. Requirements include producing a major paper on the subject; participating in class, and completing weekly thematic summaries of the material covered.

Class Materials (on order from the University CO-OP)

Jesse Wigman, *Let the People Pick the President*

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*

Course Guidelines

Missed and Late Work

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day listed for the syllabus unless otherwise noted. To discourage late work, we have adopted the following policy:

Assignments lose a letter grade for every 24-hour period they are late. This penalty includes Saturdays and Sundays. We reserve the right to make an exception to the late policy in the case of an extreme (and documentable) illness or other emergency.

Attendance

Attendance will be monitored throughout the semester and will be counted toward your participation grade for this course. Please let us know if you must miss class, beforehand if possible.

Plagiarism

Make sure you understand what plagiarism is, and avoid it. If you are not sure about how to represent another person's work in an assignment, contact the course TA or the University Writing Center for advice before submitting. Penalties for plagiarism or collusion with other students can be severe.

Class Requirements and Grades

Class Project: This is a writing course, and the course format will reflect that. The central assignment is a research paper, which can take any one of three forms as

noted below. A draft of that paper will be due on **November 24th**; the paper will be returned to you with corrections and suggestions for improvement. Then you will re-submit a final copy that will be graded.

As you work toward the final paper, we require that you submit the following:

- 1) A short *feasibility proposal*; essentially a description of the topic you plan to research showing that it is feasible;
- 2) A *full proposal* of your topic, including a review of the existing research and a research plan;
- 3) The *paper draft*; and
- 4) The *final paper*.

We strongly suggest that you work with another class member or another person you trust, and let them review your paper for form, content, and clarity. In addition, UT provides a Writing Center (<http://uwc.utexas.edu/>) to aid in the development of your writing skills.

Writing Assignments: Several short writing assignments that we will grade for writing and content, including organization, coherence of argument, use of evidence, and style.

Grades: We will grade using + and -. Grades will be determined according to the following formula:

10% Class Participation. We will take attendance every class meeting.

Please let us know if you have a reason to be absent, and we will generally be lenient in interpreting these.

20% Writing assignments, including feasibility proposal

20% Research proposal and literature summary

10% Draft Research Paper

40% Final Research Paper

Paper: Three Routes

We have two guiding standards for the paper, and for our discussions as well:

Standard 1: Adams' Dictum:

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”

--John Adams, *Argument in Defense of the Soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials, December 1770*

That is, your task is to analyze, and that means you should not cherry-pick facts or narrative to support your position. I also welcome studies of voter fraud, the common justification for making voting harder.

Standard 2: Rawls' Veil of Ignorance

Our use of Rawls' veil is this: Don't make any recommendations about possible solutions to the problems we will discuss without assuming you don't know whether you'd benefit or be harmed by the measure.

Possible Paper Topics:

Route 1: Quantitative or graphical analysis of an aspect of voting suppression

Route 2: Case Study of a particular device used, explicitly or not, to suppress votes. This can be historically oriented, or more contemporaneous analysis.

Route 3: Idiographic Study. Interview and specific case material on experiences with voter suppression or voter fraud.

Notices:

Special Needs: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, [Division of Diversity and Student Engagement](#).

Pandemic: This class will be on-line probably for the duration of the term. I'm really disappointed, but our poor leadership on this issue has given us little choice.

You may schedule in-person meetings with me or with Megan Dias, our course TA, but only if you are both masked and vaccinated. Otherwise you must use Zoom.

Course Description

This course focuses on the history and current status of attempts of political actors (political parties, groups, individual actors) to design an electorate more favorable to them. This may be done by three means:

- 1) *Electorate Construction:* Designing rules that weight the votes of one party's supporters more than other parties. Example: gerrymandering.
- 2) *Vote Suppression/Vote Dilution:* Discouraging groups with high probabilities of voting against them. Example: Legalizing partisan poll workers.
- 3) *Election Fraud:* By intervening in the tabulation process in a manner that changes the outcome that would result from a fair count. Example: changing how elections are decided after the election has been run.

Class Topics and Readings

Thursday, August 26th: Course Introduction

PART 1: How Institutions Can Suppress Votes

Tuesday, August 31st: The Constitutional Foundations of the Electoral College; and Constructing a Persuasive Argument and Supporting it.

Wegman, Chapters 1-3

Thursday, September 2nd: Democratization of America and Electoral College Myths; Institutional Voter Suppression in France.

Wegman, Chapters 4-6

Henri Guimont, French Runoff Elections: A Tool of Democracy or Voter Suppression?

Tuesday, September 7th: Institutional Reform

Wegman, Chapters 7-9

Due: Assignment 1: Write a short essay (2-3 pages) summarizing Wegman's argument. Then critique his solution, assessing any weaknesses and make suggestions on how to improve it.

Thursday, September 9th: Is there a Right to Vote in America?

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapters 1&2.

Jonathan Soros, The Missing Right. *Journal of Democracy*, Spring 2013. [CANVAS].

PART 2: Historical Perspectives: The First Great Arc

Tuesday September 14th: The First Arc of Voter Expansion and Suppression

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapters 3-6.

Due: Assignment 2: Write a short essay (2-3 pages) on why there is no right to vote in America, and whether you think the existing situation should be remedied or left the as it is. You are free to suggest remedies.

Thursday September 16th: The Lasting Horror of Reconstruction and "Redemption"

Brad Epperly, Today's Voter Suppression. (CANVAS)

Brad Epperly, et.al., Rule by Violence, Rule by Law. (CANVAS)

TPM Today's Voter Suppression Tactics Have a 150-Year History

[<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/feature/todays-voter-suppression-tactics-have-a-150-year-history>] Also CANVAS.

Tuesday, September 21st: History and Suppression: Still fighting it.

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*, Chapter 1.

TPM The Battle for the Right to Vote Has Never Been Won
[<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/feature/the-battle-for-the-right-to-vote-has-never-been-won>] Also CANVAS

Special Guest: Katya Ehresman, Voting Rights Activist and UT grad.

Thursday, September 23rd: “The Past Is Never Dead. It Is Not Even Past”;

Keele, Cubbison, and White. Suppressing Black Votes.

Brennan Center, Voter Purge Rates. CANVAS

Due: Assignment 3: List three potential research questions you might want to pursue. Justify each in a sentence or two.

Tuesday, September 28th: Research Questions, Research Feasibility, and Literature Reviews

Brooke Shannon, RQs and Feasibility

Brooke Shannon, Literature Reviews

Thursday, September 30th: Research Design

Quantitative and qualitative research. Inferring causation from either. Confounding variables and ruling them out.

Eric Bleich and Robert Pekkanen, How to Report Interview Data (on Canvas)

Assignment 4 Due: Based on our readings, briefly summarize the history of voting suppression after the Civil War. How did the Southern states get away with this massive disfranchisement?

PART 2: The Second Great Arc

Tuesday, October 5th: Progressivism and Woman Suffrage

DUE: Feasibility proposal

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapters 7 and 8.

Corrine McConaughy, Forget Susan B. Anthony (CANVAS)

Elizabeth Taylor, Woman Suffrage Texas State Historical Association
[<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/viw01>]

Thursday, October 7th: Voter Suppression in Texas: Where did we start? Where do we end?

Assignment 5 Due: Write a brief comparison of the pluses and minuses of the choices made by activists in the womans' suffrage movement.

De Leon, "Civil Rights", Texas State Historical Association
[<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pkclf>] and CANVAS

Gerrymandering in Texas
[<https://tagtx.org/about-gerrymandering/gerrymandering-in-texes/>]

Alfredo Valenzuela, Texas' Countywide Polling Place Program: A Replication Study
[CANVAS]

Diego Salazar, Trans Voters Will Be Disenfranchised in 2020 [CANVAS]

Special Guests: Jim Henson and Josh Blank of the Texas Project

Tuesday, October 14th: Cracks in the Southern Suppression Edifice

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapter 9.

Greenberg, White Primary [<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/white-primary>] and CANVAS

Donald S. Strong, The Rise of Negro Voting in Texas (CANVAS)

Thursday, October 15th: Selma and the Voting Rights Act

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapter 10.

Chandler Davidson, The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History (CANVAS)

Part III: Voter Suppression Today

Tuesday, October 19th: Do Voter ID Requirements Suppress Votes?

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*, Chapter 2.

Justin Grimmer, Voter ID. CANVAS

Cantoni and Ponds_ Strict ID Laws Don't Stop Voters. CANVAS

Thursday, October 21st: Purging Voter Rolls

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*, Chapter 3.

Brennan Center for Justice, Voter Purge Rates Remain High
[\[Brennan Center, Voter Purge Rates Remain High\]](#)

Tuesday, October 26th: Vote Dilution and Gerrymandering

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*, Chapter 4.

Fred Dews. A Primer on Gerrymandering and Political Polarization. CANVAS

Thursday October 28th: Counterrevolution and the Long Decline

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapter 11&12.

DUE: Full research plan with literature review

Tuesday, November 2nd: Research: Graphs and Statistics in Excel; Start Review and Discussion Session

Kennedy Teel, The Cost of a Name: Voter ID Laws' Effect on Women Voters [Canvas]

Cole Chisum, Predicting the Effects of Ex-Felon Enfranchisement on the 2020 Presidential Election in Florida [Canvas]

Thursday, November 4th: Continue Review and Discussion Session

Tuesday, November 9th: The Supreme Court as Anti-Democratic Enabler

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapter 13.

Ari Berman, Inside John Roberts' Decades Long Crusade Against the Voting Rights Act. *Politico* CANVAS

Ari Berman (Mother Jones) The US is Becoming a Two-Tiered Country with Separate and Unequal Voting Laws CANVAS

Thursday, November 11th: Resistance and Reform: Is There a Federal Government Role?

Michael Waldman, *The Fight to Vote*, Chapter 14 & Conclusion.

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*, Chapter 5 and 6

Tuesday, November 16th: The January 6th American Insurrection: Can Democratic Guardrails Be Restored?

National Task Force on Electoral Crises

[<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e70e52c7c72720ed714313f/t/600192b45103a7521617d636/1610715829231/ElectionTF-Report%202021.pdf>]

National Task Force on Electoral Crises

[<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e70e52c7c72720ed714313f/t/60ecbb773b84fb5bce43c7fc/1626127223644/Task+Force+Progress+Report%28July+2021%29.pdf>]

Thursday, November 19th: Discussion Section—What is to be done?

Tuesday, November 23th: No Forma Class. Informal Consultation available

DUE: Paper Draft

Tuesday, December 2nd: Why has America Never Embraced the Universal Franchise?

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote*, Conclusion and Afterward.

Thursday December 2nd: Return of Paper Drafts and Discussion of Class Projects

Thursday, December 9th: Final paper due

