

GOV 312L: Issues and Politics in American Government

Instructor: Philip Moniz
pmoniz@utexas.edu

Office Hours: MEZ 3.228 on M 11am-1pm & W 11am-12pm

Unique #: 37255

Meeting Place: PAR 301

Meeting Time: M, W, F 10am-11am

Intellectual Mission

The purpose of this course is to acquaint you with the study of public opinion and representation in the United States. A functioning republic depends on the accountability of representatives by citizens, and we will focus on how the American public meets or fails to meet this requirement. We will begin with the origins and consequences of the American public's political psychology. Along the way to theories and empirical studies of how the government responds to the public, we will explore sources of social, economic, and political inequality in American representation. By the end of the course, you will be able to think more critically about the structure and operation of American government, as well as understand the origins of our modern identity-driven, nationalized mass politics. You will also be familiarized with the methods of political-science research, including the use of administrative, survey, and field experimental data.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

Readings

All readings will be posted on Canvas as PDFs. You don't need to buy any books.

Technology Policy

You are permitted to have a computer out in class so long as you use it only to take notes and quizzes related to the course.

Grades

The grades for this course will come from:

(4) Exams (40%)

Quizzes/attendance/participation (25%)

Homework assignments (35%)

Homework assignments, exams, and quizzes will be submitted through Canvas.

Exams

Exams test material covered in the last 2 or 3 units. They are administered *in class* and may take a whole class period. They are not cumulative. You will take them on Canvas using your computer.

Quizzes

Quizzes are shorter than exams (about 10 minutes) and are administered at some point during a unit, usually in class. If you have done the reading and attended lecture, you should be able to ace these. Your 2 lowest quiz grades are dropped from your final grade.

Homework Assignments

Homework assignments are usually short (about 1-page) written exercises, but they may involve completing an online survey or participating in an online discussion. Details of homework assignments will be announced as their deadlines approach. Your lowest assignment grade is dropped from your final grade. Late submissions will be penalized 1 point per day.

Participation

Attendance will not be taken, but I do expect you to come to class. The quizzes, some of which will be administered in class without prior notice, will serve as an occasional attendance-check, as you will get a 0 if you are not in class to take it.

Grades will not be rounded. Therefore, an 82.9 is a B- and an 87.9 is a B+. If you want to appeal a grade, you must do so, at office hours, within one week after the assignment is returned to you. I will not offer make-up exams or quizzes. Final grades will be assigned according to the following structure: F: below 60; D: 60-69; C-: 70-72; C: 73-76; C+: 77-79; B-: 80-82; B: 83-86; B+: 87-89; A-: 90-92; A: 93-100.

Academic Dishonesty

There is really no winning if you cheat on your studies. This includes plagiarism, cheating, or engaging in any other unethical academic practices. You won't have learned anything and you will probably get a lower grade in the course than if you had given an honest effort. It is also punished rather severely.

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://community.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

Course Schedule and Readings, Unit by Unit

The course is divided into "units" on a given topic (listed here by uppercase Roman numeral). Units do not have a set length. Some will take a week, others may take up to 3 weeks, depending on the amount of content we cover. Once we complete a unit or two, we will have an exam on that unit's material.

Readings will be posted on Canvas and should be read by the end of the each unit.

I. Primordial Politics

- 1) Henrich (2020)

II. Identity Politics

- 1) The Power of Us (Van Bavel and Packer 2021)
- 2) Mason (2018)
- 3) Hetherington and Weiler (2018)
- 4) Lee et al. (2022)

EXAM

III. Partisan Media and Perceiving the Other (Party)

- 1) Ahler and Sood (2018)
- 2) Broockman and Kalla (n.d.a)
- 3) Prior (2013)
- 4) Broockman and Kalla (n.d.b)

IV. The Sources of Support for Trump

- 1) Hetherington and Weiler (2018, ch. 6)
- 2) Mutz (2018)
- 3) Hacker and Pierson (2020)

EXAM

V. The Rational Model; or, Ideology

- 1) Downs (1957, chs. 3-5)
- 2) Downs (1957, chs. 11-13)
- 3) Fasching and Lelkes (2024)

VI. Perceptions of Inequality

- 1) Condon and Wichowsky (2020)

VII. The Nationalization of Politics

- 1) Hopkins (2022)

VIII. Theories of Representation

- 1) Achen and Bartels (2016)
- 2) Gilens and Page (2014)

IX. Elite Influence

- 1) Gilens (2012)
- 2) Butler and Broockman (2011)
- 3) Broockman (2014)

X. Geographic Representation

- 1) Rodden (2018)
- 2) Enos (2017)

XI. Federalism

- 1) Grumbach (2022)

XII. Political Parties and Congress

- 1) Grossmann and Hopkins (2016)
- 2) Lee (2016)

Bibliography

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Ahler, Douglas J., and Gaurav Sood. 2018. "The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (3): 964–81.
- Broockman, David E., and Daniel M. Butler. 2017. "The Causal Effects of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (1): 208–21.
- Broockman, David E., and Joshua L. Kalla. n.d.a "Selective Exposure and Partisan Echo Chambers In Television News Consumption: Evidence from Linked Viewership, Administrative, and Survey Data."
- Broockman, David E., and Joshua L. Kalla. n.d.b "The Manifold Effects of Partisan Media on Viewers' Beliefs and Attitudes: A Field Experiment with Fox News Viewers."
- Butler, Daniel M., and David E. Broockman. 2011. "Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators." *American Journal of Political Science* 55 (3): 463–77.
- Condon, Meghan, and Amber Wichowsky. 2020. *The Economic Other: Inequality in the American Political Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Enos, Ryan D. 2017. *The Space Between Us: Social Geography and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fasching, Neil, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2024. "Ancestral Kinship and the Origins of Ideology." *British Journal of Political Science* 54 (1): 1–21.
- Gilens, Martin. 2012. *Affluence and Influence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (03): 564–81.
- Grossmann, Matt, and Daniel Hopkins. 2016. *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grumbach, Jacob. 2022. *Laboratories Against Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Guess, Andrew M. 2021. "(Almost) Everything in Moderation: New Evidence on Americans' Online Media Diets." *American Journal of Political Science*, February, ajps.12589.
- Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. 2020. *Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Inequality*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Henrich, Joseph. 2020. *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

- Hetherington, Marc J., and Jonathan Weiler. 2018. *Prius or Pickup? How the Answers to Four Simple Questions Explain America's Great Divide*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Hopkins, Daniel J. 2018. *The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lee, Amber Hye-Yon, Yphtach Lelkes, Carlee B. Hawkins, and Alexander G. Theodoridis. 2022. "Negative Partisanship Is Not More Prevalent than Positive Partisanship." *Nature Human Behaviour*, May.
- Lee, Frances E. 2016. *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Mutz, Diana C. 2018. "Status Threat, Not Economic Hardship, Explains the 2016 Presidential Vote." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (19).
- Prior, Markus. 2013. "Media and Political Polarization." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (1): 101–27.
- Rodden, Jonathan A. 2019. *Why Cities Lose: The Deep Roots of the Urban-Rural Political Divide*. New York: Basic Books.
- Van Bavel, Jay J., and Dominic J. Packer. 2020. *The Power of Us: Harnessing Our Shared Identities to Improve Performance, Increase Cooperation, and Promote Social Harmony*. New York: Little, Brown Spark.