

# POLS 3048: (Introduction to) Election Science

Dr. Murat Abus

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🕒 MT: 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

🏠 Office: Room Number

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🕒 TW: 01:00–01:50 p.m. | R: 09:00–09:50 a.m.

📍 Class: Room Number

## Course Description

Election science is a field that focuses on in-depth study of factors including but not limited to **voter satisfaction, voter confidence, voter registration, mail voting, election data, political parties, media environment, local news, polling places, vote tabulation, election officials, campaign spending, dispute resolution, federal oversight, and voting from abroad**. This course is an introduction to the study of this wide variety of topics related to elections in the United States. Students interested in specialization can consider the follow-up selective course on Election Administration after this introductory course. As this is an introductory course, it will not address all of the above topics. The main goal of this course is to help you broadly understand the structure and processes of American elections and the relationships between people and some of these structures and processes. We will accomplish that by reading, analyzing and discussing:

- the key structures and processes of elections;
- recent developments and the unique challenges of administering elections in the United States;
- relevant actors and factors like political parties, partisanship, media environment, campaign finance, and economic conditions;
- voters and their interaction with some of these processes and structures.

## General Education Goal

- **Developing a solid foundation in the social sciences:** Students should be well versed in critical thinking and be able to formulate written and oral reasoned argumentation supported by evidence. This foundation will prepare students for roles in various sectors they will choose in a democratic America and in a global society. These skills they internalize as part of a social science education will make students effective thinkers, communicators and life-long learners in a changing world.

## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Have a working knowledge of various components of election administration in the United States
2. Explain the relationships between these components, background factors, and people
3. Understand the challenges faced by election administration
4. Outline the reform efforts to improve election administration
5. Improve skills to present ideas effectively both orally and in written form
6. Analyze empirical evidence to make structured and informed arguments about issues related to elections

## Course Requirements

### Textbook

There is no required textbook. You will be reading sections from different books and these will be posted on Canvas / Blackboard. The following are the books from which the main reading material is taken:

- Brewer, Mark D. and L. Sandy Maisel. 2024. *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Norris, Pippa, Richard W. Franck, and Ferran Martinez i Coma. 2015. *Contentious Elections: From Ballots to Barricades*. Routledge.
- Foley, Edward B. 2024. *Ballot Battles: The History of Disputed Elections in the United States*. Oxford University Press.
- Norris, Pippa. 2017. *Why American Elections Are Flawed (and How to Fix Them)*. Cornell University Press.
- Norris, Pippa. 2011. *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dunaway, Johanna and Doris A. Graber. 2023. *Mass Media and American Politics*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. Sage.
- Hale, Kathleen, Robert Montjoy, and Mitchell Brown. 2015. *Administering Elections: How American Elections Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.

### Other Material

There will be additional required and/or recommended readings based on the progress we will make as a class. These material can be chapters from separate books, articles in magazines, newspaper articles, reports published online, or parts of websites. I will post links to online sources under class schedule and provide the other reading material through Blackboard/Canvas as well. Please note that lectures and readings will complement each other. There will be material in lectures that might not be covered in the readings and vice versa. Watch for updated class schedule and course related communication for additional material.

### Technology

You will need to use your university email and have access to Canvas/Blackboard. If there is any issue with these items you should let me know as soon as possible, and latest by the end of the second week of classes.

### Class Dynamics & Expectations

The class will depend heavily on interaction and conversation. I will ask many questions to motivate discussion and in order to participate, you will need to read the assigned readings before class. We will spend time to improve your critical thinking and reasoning skills through exercises using our subject. There will be two written assignments, and you are expected to show improvement in the way you present an idea based on the feedback I will provide for the first assignment (the first assignment will not be graded). The class will provide many opportunities for the students to exercise essential skills in oral argumentation and are expected to participate and show improvement. I will keep track of your engagement in class based on your questions and answers during classes and office hours. I will encourage wide participation. However, if there is any reason that prevents you from participating in a social setting, let me know and be sure to make use of office hours.

### Exams & Assignments

There will be two exams. First exam will be a multiple-choice exam that will be administered via Canvas/Blackboard (make sure you can access Canvas/Blackboard as early as possible, not later than the end of second week of classes). Second exam will be an in-class written exam (using blue books). Multiple-choice exam will consist of 40 questions taken from the lectures and readings. The final exam will have three questions (you will choose two to answer) and is not comprehensive. Note that lectures and readings

will complement each other, so there will be material in lectures that might not be covered in the readings and vice versa. I will routinely include an overview of wider (and more recent) studies on the topics we are covering. There will be two written assignments. The first will not be graded and will be used to give you feedback. The second one will be graded. Most of your grade on the second assignment will be based on the extent you make an improvement on your writing based on the feedback I will provide for the first assignment. Therefore, failure to submit first assignment might negatively affect your score for the second assignment. Please label your written assignments properly. For instance, if your name is Jane Doe, you should label your second assignment as “jane\_doe\_assignment2.docx”. You can submit assignments in any text format, including plain text.

## Course Policies

These course policies are subject to change, but assume they are in effect unless you hear otherwise from me.

## Academic Freedom

The subject matter of this course tends to elicit strong reactions. As we carry out or conversation and discussion in class, there will be various ideas with which some of us will not agree. You will be expected to respect each other’s opinions as they are expressed as difference in opinions and the presence of deliberation are an important part of our political system. However, I will not tolerate any personal attacks, insults, and hateful speech.

## Office Hours

You are encouraged to use the posted office hours for any inquiry that is related to the course in any way. These can include questions about the content we covered in class, content in the readings, some recent development you want to make better sense of, feedback request on your writing, practicing argumentation, asking for and discussing further material in case you are interested. If the posted hours conflict with your schedule, email me to set up an alternative time.

## Email Policy

I will answer course related emails as quickly as I can throughout the semester. There are several easy ways to make sure that you give a positive impression and get a fast response:

1. Use your official university email address
2. Include a clear subject line
3. Use formal salutation (for example “Dear Dr. Abus”) and a sign off (for example “Best”, “Best Regards”)
4. Be clear, polite and succinct

## Grading Policy

Your grade will consist of your performance on the exams, your ability and willingness to participate in the class through discussions (including those during office hours), and your improvement in the written assignment. The evaluation breakdown will be as follows:

Item	Weight
Participation	15%
Written assignment	30%
Exam #1	25%
Exam #2	30%

The grading system will follow the University convention. Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Range
A:	89.5–100
B:	79.5–89.4
C:	69.5–79.4
D:	59.5–69.4
F:	00.0–59.4

### Make-Up Exam Policy

There are no make-ups for missed exams unless there is a valid excuse.

### Extra Credit/Grade Change Policy

I give extra credits when necessary only based on your general demeanor in class. If you are not satisfied with your final exam/written assignment/final grade, request an appointment from me within **48 hours of the grade release**. If you have a valid case, I can re-grade the exams, but please keep in mind that you may get a lower grade as a result.

### Late Assignment

Written assignment that is turned in 1 minute to 24 hours late after their due time will be penalized by 20% of the assignment score. Assignments will be marked down by an additional 20% of the assignment score for each additional 24-hour period they are late.

### Attendance / Participation

Attendance is not mandatory. However, 15% of your grade in this course will consist of your participation score. I will track this through your involvement in the discussions that we will regularly have in class.

### Electronic Devices

Laptops and tablets are not allowed in the classroom. The only exception to this rule is for students that have explicit CDR accommodations. These exceptions have to be documented and approved. You may take notes using pen and paper in class. Phones are also not allowed to be out during class time under any circumstances. If you have a pressing need to use your phone, you are requested to step out of the classroom to use your phone. If I see a student using their phone, they will be subject to cold calls and if this happens repeatedly, they will be asked to leave.

### Academic Integrity Policy

### Access and Accommodations Policy

### AI Policy

### Copyright & Fair Use Statement

The materials used in this course are subject to copyright laws. For those materials which neither I nor the university owns the copyright, I have either obtained a license for use or am using the materials in a manner that I reasonably believe is in compliance with the Fair Use exception to the copyright laws. The other materials used in this course are copyrighted. By this, I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, exams, lectures, quizzes, assignments, and any other document I post in Blackboard. Because these items are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy and distribute any course materials unless I, or the document publishers, expressly grant permission.

## Tentative Class Schedule

Important: Class readings are subject to change, contingent on unforeseen circumstances and the progress we make as a class. There might be instances where we will need to cancel class for a week due to professional conference attendance and presentation. Students are encouraged to check the Blackboard/Canvas announcements section and any e-mails from me for updates.

### **Week 01, 01/12 – 01/16: Course Introduction, Topic Introduction (Election Science)**

*Read:*

- The Course Syllabus

### **Week 02, 01/19 – 01/23: Political Parties, Elections and Democracy**

*Read:*

- Brewer and Maisel, Chapter 1: Elections and Political Parties

### **Week 03, 01/26 – 01/30: Voting & Democratic Deficit**

*Read:*

- Brewer and Maisel, Chapter 3: Voting and Other Forms of Political Participation
- Norris 2011, Introduction, pp. 3-9

### **Week 04, 02/02 – 02/06: Contentious Elections**

*Read:*

- Norris, Franck, and i Coma, pp. 1-15: From Votes to Violence
- Norris, Franck, and i Coma, pp. 133-147: The Risks of Contentious Elections

### **Week 05, 02/09 – 02/13: Prelude to 2000 Presidential Election, or Have We Been Here Many Times Before?**

*Read:*

- Foley, Chapter 2: The Novelty of Chief Executive Elections  
(Read either the 1792 gubernatorial election in New York or the 1806 gubernatorial election in Massachusetts)
- Foley, Chapter 5: Hayes v. Tilden

### **Week 06, 02/16 – 02/20: 2000 Presidential Election**

*Peruse:*

- [The Palm Beach Post Article from 2010](#)
- [Presidential Election Vote Recount in Florida \(Wikipedia\)](#)

### **Week 07, 02/23 – 02/27: Aftermath of 2000 Presidential Election**

*Peruse:*

- [Help America Vote Act \(2002\)](#)
- [Election Assistance Commission](#)

### **Week 08, 03/02 – 03/06: Midterm Exam Week**

*Activity:*

- There will be no class this week. Class time will also be set aside for office hours for you to ask questions.
- Midterm exam will be held on ..... at .....

### **Week 09, 03/09 – 03/13: Spring Break**

### **Week 10, 03/16 – 03/20: Writing Advice**

*Activity:*

- Prompt for the first written assignment out.

### **Week 11, 03/23 – 03/27: The Effect of Organized Groups**

*Read:*

- Brewer and Maisel, Chapter 4: Organized Groups in the Electoral Process

### **Week 12, 03/30 – 04/03: Partisanship and Elections I**

*Read:*

- Foley, Chapter 10: The Eighties and Nineties: Reemergence of Intensified Partisanship
- Dunaway and Graber, Chapter 14: Current Trends and Future Directions, pp. 608–619.

*Activity:*

- Submit the first written assignment.

### **Week 13, 04/06 – 04/10: Partisanship and Elections II**

*Read:*

- Norris 2017, Chapter 1: Partisan Polarization over Electoral Procedures

*Activity:*

- Prompt for the second written assignment out.

### **Week 14, 04/13 – 04/17: Election Administration**

*Read:*

- Hale, Montjoy, Brown, Chapter 7: Current Challenges in Election Administration

### **Week 15, 04/20 – 04/24: Media Environment and Elections**

*Read:*

- Dunaway and Graber, Chapter 13: Media Effects: Then and Now, esp. pp. 553–566 & pp. 574–588.

*Activity:*

- Submit second written assignment by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday ....

### **Week 16, 04/27 – 05/01: Review & Discussion**

*Activity:*

- We will have a general discussion emphasizing some of the most important points from the course and exercise oral argumentation skills that we applied throughout the semester.

### **Week 17, 05/04 – 05/05: Final Exam**

*Final Exam:*

- Final exam will be held on ..... at .....