

POLITICS & LAW 380: VOTING

SYLLABUS

Instructor: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Colloquium: MWF 9:00am - 9:50am

Location: [REDACTED]

Office Hours: MWF 12:00pm - 1:30pm, by appointment

Course Overview

Voting is the fundamental practice of democratic politics. The efficacy of a political system is contingent on the ability of the will of the people to be expressed politically. This course examines voting in the United States. We will consider the formal laws, regulations, and legal precedents that influence voting at the national level in the United States. We will consider how voter participation and voting practice has changed over time. Topics include voting systems, voter efficacy, suffrage, voter suppression, gerrymandering, voter participation, voter turnout, and voting behavior.

Course Objectives and Expectations: (1) to gain factual knowledge of the primary voting laws, legal precedents, theories of voting behavior, and electoral systems that affect elections in the United States (2) to develop skills in oral and written communication; (3) to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view; (4) and to practice asking questions and seeking answers.

This course offers you the opportunity to become a more skilled reader, thinker, communicator, and writer. Many of the skills and much of the knowledge that you gain in this class is applicable to your other classes and to your activities outside the college. The class is designed to be a guided dialogue amongst your colleagues of the assigned materials; together we create an intellectual community dedicated to learning. You are expected to attend each class, on time, prepared to ask and answer questions, and honestly discuss the material.

It is highly likely that each of you has an opinion or belief or “hot take” concerning the electoral system in the United States. How can we not care: there is no more fundamental aspect of a democracy than electoral form, practice, efficacy, and trust. There is a reflexive aspect to this course as it offers you the opportunity to examine your own political expectations and preconceptions, and, where relevant, apply the skills and knowledge that you acquire in our class outside of the classroom as a relative, friend, citizen, employee, or dinner conversationalist. From the outset, to be clear, there is no perfect electoral system; rather, each electoral system has tradeoffs; there are also different (perhaps more and less ethical) ways to determine who is and is not eligible to vote. This course will likely challenge our regnant opinions and beliefs about how and for whom the political system in the United States works, and what possibilities exist for more effective, “fair” electoral politics.

Schedule: A detailed, up-to-date reading schedule is available on Canvas.¹**Important**

Dates:

Wednesday, August 25: First Class (9:00am -9:50am): Introductions (please be prepared to introduce yourself to the class), Syllabus overview, course expectations.

Friday, August 27: Complete pre-class check in on Canvas (due by 8:00 am before class); complete assigned reading as posted on Canvas.

All subsequent readings and assignments will be posted on Canvas.

Monday, September 6: Labor Day: University Holiday, Class is Canceled

Wednesday, September 8: Rosh Hashanah, Class is Canceled

Monday, September 27: Written Assignment #1 due

Friday, October 8 at 4:00pm - Monday, October 11 at 11:59pm: Midterm Exam

Monday, October 11: Midterm Exam, Class is Canceled

Monday, October 18: Fall Break: University Holiday, Class is Canceled

Monday, October 25 : Written Assignment #2 due

Wednesday, November 10: Professor is at a Conference, Class is Canceled

Friday, November 12: Professor is at a Conference, Class is Canceled

Monday, November 22: Written Assignment #3 due

Wednesday, November 24: Thanksgiving: University Holiday, Class is Canceled

Friday, November 26: Thanksgiving: University Holiday, Class is Canceled

Wednesday, December 8: Last Day of Classes; **Final Projects due**

Friday, December 10 at 9:00 am - Monday, October 13 at 9:00am: Final Exam

¹ I reserve the right to alter the reading schedule and assignment due dates at my discretion in the event that we fall behind, want to spend more time on a specific topic, find ourselves on a fascinating tangent, or choose to discuss a relevant political event. I will never make a major assignment due earlier in the semester.