**POLITICAL SCIENCE 429**

**ELECTIONS, POLITICAL BEHAVIOR AND PARTICPATION**

**SPRING 2014**

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Shafer

Class Hours: T/R – 9:25-10:40 – Wheeler Hall 306

Office Hours/Location: T/R – 11:00-12:00, W- 11:00-1:00 or by appointment

Wheeler Hall - Room 305, 404-522-3319 (Office)

Email: rebecca.shafer@morehouse.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This seminar will cover some of the key topics and controversies in the study of American public opinion, political participation, voting behavior, and elections. This course will address questions like why some people vote but others do not, how individuals make political choices, and how people participate in other ways.

Ideally, the course will sharpen our appreciation of the complex and ever-changing dynamics of electoral politics that underlie voters’ choices and democratic representation. We will start with a focus on public opinion, political socialization, voter turnout, and political information. Next, we will focus on partisanship as it relates to social groups, polarization and party system change. Finally, we will explore various perspectives on the determinants of voters’ preferences, trying to decipher why people vote as they do.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

The required readings for this course include 2 books and several other book chapters and journal articles. Readings that are not in the textbooks will be available on *coursesites* unless otherwise noted.

Niemi, Richard G., Herbert F. Weisberg, and David C. Kimball (eds.). *Controversies in*

*Voting Behavior* (CQ Press, 5th edition, 2011). *(****NWK)***

Flanigan, William H. and Nancy H. Zingale. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate* (CQ Press, 12nd edition, 2010). **(FZ)**

**CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ETIQUETTE**

Students are expected to participate during each class period. This includes completing the required readings prior to each class period and being able to discuss the readings in an intelligent manner.

In class, discussions will occur regularly and I believe that these discussions can benefit a student’s critical thinking skills and exposure to various perspectives. Some of the issues discussed in class may be considered controversial and/or sensitive. Students should feel free to express their opinions in class and I **EXPECT** everyone in class will respect one another and maintain a constructive and civil dialogue.

Students **MAY** use their laptops in class to take notes, however this privilege may be suspended if I detect that students are using their laptops for other purposes. However, the use of cell phones in class is strictly **PROHIBITED**.

**Graded Assignments and Course Requirements**

1. Class Participation – 10%
2. Reaction Papers – 30%
3. Discussion Group Leader – 20%
4. Research Paper – 40%

Class Participation

You are expected to attend and participate in class lectures and/or discussions. The quality and frequency of your participation will affect your grade. Students’ grades in Class Participation are based on attendance, attentiveness to others, and active, regular, and constructive participation in class discussions. More than three unexcused absences will lower your Class Participation grade. To ensure that you have read and thought about the readings before class, I ***MAY*** give short unannounced quizzes.

Reaction Papers/Summary Statements – 6 each

These are 1½ to 2 page (double-spaced) papers in which you respond to the week’s topic and readings. The papers should include explicit references to that week’s topic and required reading(s). They should be analytical as well as descriptive—don’t just summarize the readings! Expressing your opinion is fine—even encouraged!—but be sure to provide evidence to support your claims. These papers are intended to facilitate individual comprehension of and reflection upon the readings, as well as class discussion. These should be posted on the day before the corresponding topics is assigned (unless otherwise noted).

Discussion Group Leader

Students will be responsible for leading the class discussion on particular topic(s). As discussion leaders, students will be responsible for not only offering a summary of the week’s readings, but also providing critical analysis of the topic. Students leading discussion will be responsible for developing a series of questions designed to spark discussion among classmates.

Research Paper

Each student will write a paper on a topic relating in some way to political behavior and elections. All paper topics must be selected with the professor’s approval. You will submit a typed-one page outline by the end of **Week 5** (Feb. 13th) of the class. The paper should be approximately 10 pages, double-spaced. Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation of his or her paper to the class on **4/24** or **4/29**. Students should have a 1 page abstract to share with class members at this presentation

\* More Information on research paper will be given in class

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Class Attendance is required at Morehouse College. Per Morehouse policy, I will be taking attendance daily. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences in this course. It is your responsibility to make up scheduled work because of officially excused absences. Students who exceed the maximum number of unexcused absences may be administratively withdrawn from the course or receive a failing grade in the course.

**MAKEUP AND LATE WORK**

The scheduled dates of all exams and written assignments are clearly indicated in this syllabus. No make-up exams or late papers will be accepted without my **prior approval**.

**Accommodation of Persons with Disabilities**

In accordance with Title 5, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Acts of 1990, reasonable accommodation will be provided to any student who has followed Morehouse College procedures. To begin the process, please contact Ms. Carolyn Walker (x2636) the beginning of the semester. Once the need for accommodations has been officially established, the student should consult with the instructor to insure that the student’s needs may be met as effectively as possible.

**Plagiarism**

Students shall not plagiarize. Plagiarism is using the intellectual property or product of someone else without giving proper credit. The undocumented use of someone else’s words or ideas in any medium of communication (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge) is a serious offense, can result in severe academic and/or disciplinary action (see the College Catalog).

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

The syllabus is designed as a tentative calendar, it is not meant as a strict schedule. It is possible that the class schedule will be revised at my discretion.

Jan. 16 Introduction

Jan 21 & Jan 23 Foundations of Voting/Elections & Political Behavior

* ***NWK*** – Chapter 1
* ***FZ*** – Chapter 1
* Erikson, Robert and Kent Tedin.( 2011). *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact*.
  + Chapters 5

Jan 28 Public Opinion

* ***FZ*** – Chapter 6 & Appendix
* Norrander, Barbara & Clyde Wilcox. (2010). *Understanding Public Opinion.*
  + Introduction

Jan 30 & Feb 4 Political Participation/Turnout (Part 1)

* ***FZ*** – Chapter 2
* Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green and Ron Shachar. (2003). “Voting May be Habit Forming: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment,” *American Journal of Political Science*,47(3), 540-550.
* Russell J. Dalton. (2009). “Bowling Alone Or Protesting with a Group,” in *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation Is Reshaping American Politics*, chapter 4 pp. 53-79.

Feb 6 & Feb 11 Political Participation/Turnout (Part 2)

* ***NWK*** – Chapters 2 & 4
* Leighley, Jan E., and Jonathan Nagler, (1992). “Socioeconomic Class Bias in Turnout, 1964-1988: the Voters Remain the Same,” *American Political Science Review*, 86(3), 725-736.
* McDonald, Michael P. (2008) "The Return of the Voter: Voter Turnout in the 2008 Presidential Election," The Forum, 6(4), Article 4.

Feb 13 In-Class Video

Feb 18 & 20 Political Information

* ***NWK*** – Chapters 5, 7, and 8
* Rahn, Wendy. (1993). “The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(2), 472-496.
* Jerit, J., & Barabas, J. (2012). Partisan Perceptual Bias and the Information Environment. *Journal of Politics*, 74(3), 672-1684.

Feb 25 & 27 Political Information & The Media

* ***FZ*** – Chapter 7
* ***NWK*** – Chapter 6
* Brader, Ted. (2005). “Striking a Responsive Cord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions." *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 388-405
* Freedman, Paul, Michael Franz, and Kenneth Goldstein. (2004). “Campaign Advertising and Democratic Citizenship." *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(4), 723-41

Mar 4 - Mar 6 In-Class Video

March 10-14 **SPRING BREAK**

Mar 18 & Mar 20 Partisanship & Social Groups

* ***FZ*** – Chapters 3 & 5
* Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Donald, E. 1960. *The American Voter*
  + Chapter 6
* Magleby, D. B., Nelson, C. J., & Westlye, M. C. (2011). The Myth of The Independent Voter Revisited. in *Facing the Challenge of Democracy: Explorations in the Analysis of Public Opinion and Political Participation*, 238-266.

Mar 25 & Mar 27 Partisanship & Party System Change

* ***FZ*** – Chapter 4
* ***NWK*** – Chapters 18, 20

Apr 1 & Apr 3 Partisanship & Polarization

* ***NWK*** – Chapters 12-17

Apr 8 **Vote Determinants**Part 1 - Overview

* NWK (4th edition)– Chapters 10
* **FZ** - Chapter 8

Apr 15 **Vote Determinants**Part 2 – Campaign Effects

* NWK (4th edition)– Chapter 13
* Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science, 40*(3), 825-850.

Apr 17 **Vote Determinants**Part 3 – The Economy

* **NWK** – Chapters 9-11

Apr 22  **Vote Determinants**Part 4 – Race and Gender

* McDermott, M. L. (1998). Race and Gender Cues in Low-Information Elections. *Political Research Quarterly, 51*(4), 895-918
* Sigelman, Lee & Carol K. Sigelman. (1992). Sexism, Racism, and Ageism in Voting Behavior: An Experimental Analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 45(4), 263-269

Apr 24 & Apr 29 - Presentations