

GOV 209

Introduction to Political Behavior

Fall 2007
Kanbar 107
Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30-9:55am

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Office Hours:

Tuesday, 1pm-2:30pm
Thursday, 10am-Noon
And by appointment

This course is an introduction to political behavior in American politics. We consider three major ideas. **First**, what is political participation? Is voting sufficient? Is economic participation also political? Is contributing to candidates or parties really a form of political (and free) speech? I take a broad approach to the question of what is political participation, and we will consider the relevance of social, religious, and civic behavior on this concept. **Next**, we examine the reasons why citizens do or do not participate in various forms. Why vote at all? Why are Americans less active in politics today than in years past? How useful are the explanations given for a noted decline in civic and social participation? **Finally**, we investigate the normative implications of participation in various forms. What if everyone voted? How can we increase turnout rates? Is more participation always better than less? The major goal of this course is to provide an overview to the important debates in American politics about the reasons for and implications of political participation in various forms.

Course Requirements

There are 5 major components to your grade:

1. **Five reading reactions** (15 points; each worth 3 points)—these are short reactions of about 2 pages (double-spaced). I will evaluate these on the basis of how well you react to the readings (namely, originality of thought and conciseness). There are no right or wrong answers, but I will challenge you to think logically. These papers are due **in class** on Thursdays, and they should focus on the readings for that week; simply reiterating the discussions in class is not enough. Because there are only 5 of them, you can choose which weeks you want to turn them in.
*You may NOT hand in more than one reaction paper in a week
**You must hand in reaction papers in class; late papers or emailed papers will NOT be accepted
***You cannot hand in a reading reaction on the week of the midterm, the week of Thanksgiving, or the final week of classes.
2. **Participation** (10 points)—this includes attendance and class participation. Attendance is required, and I will take regular note of who is and who is not in class. I understand that people get sick, have doctor's appointments, and so on, but I will only grant excused absences in rare

circumstances. Be advised, simple attendance is not sufficient; I will also evaluate participation on your comments in class, and I urge you to ask questions in lecture or express your opinion.

3. **Midterm Exam** (30 points) — scheduled for Thursday, October 18th. It will be an in-class essay exam dealing with the readings *and lectures* up through October 11th. Note that class on October 16th will be review. The exam will consist of 10 concepts, and 2 essay questions. You will pick 7 of the 10 concepts and provide a definition and significance; you will answer 1 of the 2 essays.
4. **Final Exam** (30 points) — an in-class essay exam that is NOT cumulative; it is on the lectures and readings for all classes after the mid-term. Note that the last class of the semester will be review. The format of the final exam is the same as the mid-term.
5. **Final project** (15 points) — a 5-page double-spaced paper (5 pages only, please!) that considers how the Internet will affect one of the class concepts. We give only minor attention this semester to the role of the Internet in political behavior. This is partly because the academic investigation of Internet political participation is on-going. So, consider how a major concept from class will work in an online political community. For example, how might campaign ads work online? What about the concept of online social capital? How is the media's role in American politics affected by blogs?
Two things are important to a successful paper: **first, that you have a clear and well-argued thesis (take a stand; be controversial); **second**, to bolster your claims, you should make reference to class readings and/or any outside readings.*
****This paper is due on November 20th.** Take note of this date; it is the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. You cannot email me this paper, so if you have early travel plans for the holiday, you need to complete the paper and hand it in to me before you leave campus.

Readings

There are three books for this course, and a number of outside articles. The books are available through the campus bookstore, and all of the outside readings are on electronic reserve (which can be accessed through Blackboard and the library website).

1. Robert Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster
2. Martin Wattenberg. 2002. *Where Have All the Voters Gone?* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
3. William Flanigan and Nancy Zingale. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. Washington, D.C: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Other Issues

1. I expect all students to abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code, which can be accessed online at <http://library.bowdoin.edu/>. Click on "Getting Started," and then "Concerning Plagiarism." If you have any concerns or questions about how to cite work appropriately, please consult me or a reference librarian.
2. I will make use of Blackboard to convey information and class discussion topics. I have also posted the syllabus there, and I encourage you to check the course page frequently.

3. If you have chosen to take the class as Credit/D/F, I will only grant a Credit grade if the student has completed all of the work for the class. This means completing all five reading reactions, the final paper, and both exams.

Part 1— What is Political Participation?

August 30— Syllabus handed out (I am away for a conference on this day)

September 4—A Primer on Political Participation

- Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Chapter 2
- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 1
- Putnam, Chapter 1

September 6—Voting

- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 2
 - Wattenberg, Chapters 1-2
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September 11— Non-Voting Political Activity

- Putnam, Chapter 2
- Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Chapter 3

September 13— Civic, Religious, and Social Behavior

- Putnam, Chapters 3-6
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September 18— Joining Groups: Membership Groups vs. "Front" Groups

- Putnam, Chapters 7-9

September 20—Campaign Finance as Participation

- J. Skelly Wright. "Politics and the Constitution: Is Money Speech?" *The Yale Law Journal*, 85(8): 1001-1021
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September 25—Capitalism as Democracy

- Richard Merelman and Michael Franz, "Markodemocracy? A Reconnaissance," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 45(3): pp.451-470

Part 2-What Explains Political (Non)Participation?

September 27— The Voting Paradox

- Wattenberg, Chapter 3

October 2— Partisanship

- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapters 3-5

October 4— The Youth Vote

- Wattenberg, Chapter 4
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October 9— No class (Fall Vacation)

October 11— Ideology

- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 6
 - *Review Sheet for Mid-term Exam handed out*
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October 16— Mid-term Review

October 18— Mid-term Exam

October 23— Campaign Effects

- Wattenberg, Chapter 7
- Lee Sigelman and Mark Kugler. 2003. "Why is Research on the Effects of Negative Campaigning So Inconclusive," *The Journal of Politics*, 65 (1): 142-160."

October 25— Campaign Effects, cont.

- Alan Gerber and Donald Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review*. pp.653-663.
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October 30— Media Effects

- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 7

November 1— Vote Choice

- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 8
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November 6 (Election Day!!) — In-Class Exercise

Movie Night
(7pm in Shannon Room—Hubbard Hall)
(If you come, it counts as one full credit reaction paper)

November 8— Trends in Social Capital: Do they Travel to Politics?

- Putnam, Chapters 10-12
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November 13— Trends in Social Capital, cont.

- Putnam, Chapters 13-15

Part 3— What are the Implications?

November 15— What if Everyone Voted?

- Wattenberg, Chapter 5
 - Jack Citrin, Erik Schickler, and John Sides. 2003. "What if Everyone Voted? Simulating the Impact of Increased Turnout in Senate Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*. pp. 75-90.
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November 20— Can We Improve Turnout?

- Wattenberg, Chapter 6 and 8
- *Final paper due*

November 22—No class (Thanksgiving)

November 27— Is a Lot of Participation the Ideal?

- Jack Walker. 1966. "A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy," *American Political Science Review*. 60: 285-295.

November 29— What Happens with (High) Low Social Capital? The Upside

- Putnam, Chapter 16-21
 - *Review Sheet for Final Exam handed out*
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December 4— What Happens, cont. The Downside

- Putnam, Chapter 22

December 6— Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 12th, 9:00am