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? 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 Wednesdays, 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 from your comments in class, and I urge you to ask questions in lecture or express your opinion.
*I reserve the right to conduct a pop quiz on the readings in any particular class. Such a quiz will consist of two or three questions about the readings, which will be very easy to answer if you come to class prepared. These quizzes will help determine your participation grade, meaning that unprepared students will lose some points on their final grade.

3. **Midterm Exam** (30 points) — scheduled for Wednesday, October 21st. It will be an in-class essay exam dealing with the readings and lectures up through October 14th. Note that class on October 19th 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) — An off-campus exercise that culminates in a 10-12 page paper. See the final page of the syllabus for complete information.

**Readings**

There are five books for this course, and a few 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).


**Other Issues**

1. I expect all students to abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code, which can be accessed online at [www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/forms/pdf/honor_code.pdf](http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/forms/pdf/honor_code.pdf). 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/project, and both exams.

**Part 1—What is Political Participation?**

September 7—Introductions and Expectations

September 9—A Primer on Political Participation
- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 1 [24 pages]
- Putnam, Chapter 1 [14 pages]

*Common Good Day on September 12th*

September 14—Voting
- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 2 [24 pages]
- Wattenberg, Chapters 1-2 [47 pages]

September 16—Non-Voting Political Activity
- Putnam, Chapter 2 [17 pages]
- Winograd and Hais, pp.1-49 [49 pages]

September 21—Civic, Religious, and Social Behavior
- Putnam, Chapters 3-6 [68 pages]
- Winograd and Hais, pp.50-65 [16 pages]

September 23—Civic, Religious, and Social Behavior, cont.
- Putnam, Chapters 7-9 [64 pages]

September 28—Capitalism as Democracy
- Final Project overview due in class

**Part 2-What Explains Political (Non)Participation?**

September 30—The Voting Paradox
- Wattenberg, Chapter 3 [24 pages]

October 5—Partisanship
- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapters 3-5 [65 pages]

October 7—Ideology
- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 6 [32 pages]
October 12—No class (Fall Vacation)

October 14— The Youth Vote
- Wattenberg, Chapter 4 [23 pages]
- Winograd and Hais, pp.66-108 [42 pages]
- Review Sheet for Mid-term Exam handed out

October 19—Mid-term Review

October 21— Mid-term Exam

October 26— Campaign Effects
- Flanigan and Zingale, Chapter 7-8 [60 pages]

October 28— Campaign Effects, cont.
- Wattenberg, Chapter 7 [17 pages]

November 2— Trends in Social Capital: Do they Travel to Politics?
- Putnam, Chapters 10-13 [65 pages]

- Putnam, Chapters 14-15 [38 pages]

November 9— Millennials Rising?, cont.
- Winograd and Hais, pp.111-188 [77 pages]

November 11 — Millennials Rising?, cont.
- Winograd and Hais, pp.191-267 [78 pages]

November 16— Millennials Rising?, cont.
- Bauerlein, pp.1-69 [69 pages]

November 18— Millennials Rising?, cont.
- Bauerlein, pp.70-111 [42 pages]

November 23— Millennials Rising?, cont.
- Bauerlein, pp.113-236 [123 pages]

**Part 3— What are the Implications?**

November 25—No class (Thanksgiving)

November 30—Can We Improve Turnout?
- Wattenberg, Chapter 6 and 8 [36 pages]

December 2—Is a Lot of Participation the Ideal?

December 7—What Happens with (High) Low Social Capital?
• Putnam, Chapter 16-22 [75 pages]
• Final paper due
• Review Sheet for Final Exam handed out

December 9—Review for Final Exam

**Final Exam:** Thursday, December 17th, 2pm
Final Project

We spend a considerable amount of time this semester dealing with two key ideas: the importance of civic participation in American life, and the generational nature of major change in American politics. Some of the books we read will question the vitality of American life in recent years, and others will explore the role of younger generations in facilitating or stopping the noted declines in civic life. The goal of the final project is to introduce you to the diversity of community involvement available to an active citizenry, and to witness the levels of civic engagement within the Brunswick community.

To that effect, you are required to spend some time this semester in an off-campus or online activity that allows you to see our course concepts in action in the local community. Here’s the plan:

**Step 1** → Pick an off-campus or online activity where you commit 8-10 hours this semester.

Some examples include:

1. Attending a few town meetings, such as school board or town council. Town meetings are posted at: [http://www.brunswickme.org/](http://www.brunswickme.org/) and click on “meeting calendar.” Issues to consider: what do the meetings cover? Who attends from the community? How are the meetings run? What conclusions do you draw about the performance of local government? Does it solve important problems? Does it function well?
2. Attending meetings for election-related groups or groups pushing for certain public policies, such as the environment. Issues to consider: similar to above. Most especially, are local political groups likely to affect change with their actions?
3. Volunteering at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. For example, Tedford Housing serves the local community. Visit [http://www.tedfordshelter.org/](http://www.tedfordshelter.org/) and click on “how you can help.” Issues to consider: What kinds of volunteers did you work with? What kinds of people did you help? Did you view your service as helpful to the community? What additional help does the group need?
5. Volunteering at a retirement community. For example, Mid-coast Senior Health Center provides care for local elderly. Visit [http://www.midcoastseniorhealthcenter.com/](http://www.midcoastseniorhealthcenter.com/) and click on “volunteer opportunities.” Issues to consider: how do residents view young people today? What do they view as challenges and opportunities for younger generations?
6. Starting an online group about a local issue, with the goal of communicating the concerns of the group to a policy-maker. Issues to consider: who joins your group? What policy issue(s) did you deal with? How did you use the group to communicate a concern to a public official?
7. Start an online blog about a local or state issue. Issues to consider: similar to above. Most especially, as a blogger, can you make any real difference? How do you get noticed?
8. Be creative! *I encourage you to use the above list as a starting point for developing a project that matches your experience and interests.*

Group projects are acceptable, and you only hand in one paper per group. Groups of no more than 3 are permitted, however. Students should not feel beholden to join groups, however. It might make sense for a few students to jointly perform an activity, but it is not required.
By September 28, turn in a brief (one or two paragraphs) overview of your off-campus activity and what you hope to show in your final paper. I’ll turn these back to you, with comments on how to proceed, by September 30th.

**Step 2** → Between late September and late November, spend 8-10 hours on this activity, recording your observations, especially as they relate to course concepts.

**Step 3** → On December 7 turn in a 10-12 page paper outlining your observations. We will discuss the paper in far more detail as the semester progresses. Feel free to consult with me at any time, however, about how to proceed with the final paper.

**A few important things to keep in mind:**

Many students are already involved in local outreach or service projects. You may use these commitments as a basis to fulfill the requirements of this course.

I will ask for regular in-class updates throughout the semester. I’ll call on someone to give the class an update about what they are doing. This will help all of us structure our experience to fit the paper requirements.

One issue in particular is very important to a successful paper: you should make reference to class readings and concepts. I cannot reiterate this enough. It should be clear to me that you have considered the concepts in our course in evaluating the content of your community participation.