

GOV 2050

Public Opinion and Voting

Spring 2020
Adams 208
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:05am-11:30am

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Office Hours:
Monday, 9-10am
Friday, 2-3pm
And by appointment

This course considers political behavior in American politics. We consider three major ideas. **First**, what is political participation? Is voting sufficient? 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 6 major components to your grade:

1. **Four reading reactions** (8 points; each worth 2 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**, and they should focus on the readings for that week; simply reiterating the discussions in class is not enough. Because there are only 4 of them, you can choose which class dates you want to turn them in.
*You must hand in reaction papers in class; late papers or emailed papers will NOT be accepted
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.

3. **Weekly Quizzes** (10 points)—there is a possibility of a quiz on any class day that will deal with the readings for that specific day. It will consist of 2-3 very short questions on the readings.
*You are exempt from the quiz if you do a reading reaction on that day.
4. **Midterm Exam** (30 points) — scheduled for Thursday, March 5th. It will be an in-class essay exam dealing with the readings *and lectures* up through February 27th. Note that class on March 3rd will be review.
5. **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.
6. **Final project** (12 points) — A group project that will focus of updating the trends in Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*. Composition of the groups and more detail on the project will be discussed in class. The final project will consist of a class presentation and very short paper and self-review.

Readings

There are three books for this course and a number of outside articles. All of the outside readings are accessible through Blackboard.

1. Robert Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster
2. Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, Michael Wagner, William Flanigan and Nancy Zingale. 2018. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. 14th Edition. Washington, D.C: Congressional Quarterly Press.
3. Lilliana Mason. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Other Issues

1. I expect all students to abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code, which can be accessed online at: <https://www.bowdoin.edu/dean-of-students/student-handbook/the-academic-honor-code-and-social-code.html>. If you have any concerns or questions about how to cite work appropriately, please consult a reference librarian or me.
2. 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 reading reactions, the final paper/project, and both exams.

3. I am not allowing the use of laptops during class time. Old-fashioned notebooks and pens/pencils are recommended for note taking.

Part 1—What is Political Participation?

January 21— Introductions and Expectations

January 23—A Primer on Political Participation

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

January 28—Voting

- TWFZ, Chapters 2-3

January 30—Non-Voting Political Activity

- Putnam, Chapter 2
- *Visit from Barbara Levergood, Research and Instruction Librarian—to discuss final projects*

February 4—Civic, Religious, and Social Behavior

- Putnam, Chapters 3-6

February 6—Civic, Religious, and Social Behavior, cont.

- Putnam, Chapters 7-9

Part 2—What Explains Political (Non)Participation?

February 11— Partisanship

- TWFZ, Chapter 4
- Mason, Chapters 1-2

February 13— Ideology

- TWFZ, Chapters 5
- Mason, Chapters 3-4

February 18— Ideology, cont.

- TWFZ, Chapters 6

February 20—Polarization

- Mason, Chapters 5-7

February 25—Populism

- Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris. 2017. “Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: *The Silent Revolution* in Reverse.” *Perspectives on Politics*, 15(2): 443-454.
- Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch, and Robert Jones, “Beyond Economics: Fears of Cultural Displacement Pushed the White Working Class to Trump,” PRRI/The Atlantic Report.

February 27— Campaign Effects

- TWFZ, Chapter 7
- *Review Sheet for Mid-term Exam handed out*

March 3— Mid-term Review

March 5— Mid-term Exam

March 9-20—Spring Break!

March 24—Campaign Effects, cont.

- TWFZ, Chapter 8
- Pablo Barberá, Andreu Casas, Jonathan Nagler, Patrick J. Egan, Richard Bonneau, John T. Jost And Joshua A. Tucker. 2019. “Who Leads? Who Follows? Measuring Issue Attention And Agenda Setting By Legislators And The Mass Public Using Social Media Data,” *American Political Science Review*. 113(4): 883-901.

March 26— Trends in Social Capital: Do they Travel to Politics?

- Putnam, Chapters 10-13

March 31—Trends in Social Capital, cont.

- Putnam, Chapters 14-15

April 2—Partisanship and Political Psychology

- James Druckman, Matthew Levendusky, and Audrey McLain. 2017. “No Need to Watch: How the Effects of Partisan Media Can Spread via Interpersonal Discussions,” *American Journal of Political Science*, pp.1-14.
- Erik Peterson. 2017. “The Role of the Information Environment in Partisan Voting,” *The Journal of Politics*. 79(4).

April 7— Partisanship and Political Psychology, cont.

- Alexander Theodoridis. 2017. “Me, Myself, and (I), (D), or (R)? Partisanship and Political Cognition through the Lens of Implicit Identity,” *The Journal of Politics*. 79(4).
- Jack Edelson et al. 2017. “The Effect of Conspiratorial Thinking and Motivated Reasoning on Belief in Election Fraud,” *Political Research Quarterly*, pp.1-14.

April 9— Partisanship and Political Psychology, cont.

- John Holbein. 2017. “Childhood Skill Development and Adult Political Participation,” *American Political Science Review*.

April 14—Group Presentations

April 16—Group Presentations

April 21— Group Presentations

Part 3— What are the Implications?

April 23— What Happens with (High) Low Social Capital?

- Putnam, Chapter 16-22

April 28—Can We Improve Turnout?

- Elizabeth Addonizio, Donald P. Green, and James M. Glaser. 2007. "Putting the Party Back into Politics: An Experiment Testing Whether Election Day Festivals Increase Voter Turnout." *Political Science & Politics* 40: 721-727.
- Jennifer Hochschild. 2010. "If Democracies Need Informed Voters, How Can They Thrive While Expanding Enfranchisement?" *Election Law Journal*. 9(2): 111-123.

April 30— The Future

- Robert Taylor, Cassandra Burton-Wood, and Maryanne Garry. 2017. "America Was Great When Nationally Relevant Events Occurred and When Americans Were Young," *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*.
- Joshua Darr, Matthew Hitt, and Johanna Dunaway. 2018. "Newspaper Closures Polarize Voting Behavior," *Journal of Communication*. 68: 1007-1028.
- Mason, Chapter 8
- *Review Sheet for Final Exam handed out*

May 5— Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 13, 8:30-11:30am