

**Political Science 135:  
Comparative Political Behavior**

**Instructor:  
David Fortunato**

Spring 2015  
Meetings: T & R  
Kolligian 217  
12:00 - 1:15pm

Office Hours: T & R  
SSM 208B  
2:00 - 3:15p  
email: dfortunato@ucmerced.edu

**Course Description:**

The focus of this class is voting in the comparative perspective. We will cover the two dominant general models of vote choice — prospective and retrospective voting — and analyze how these behaviors are conditioned by political institutions. In so doing, we will study how people acquire and process political information, how they deal with the relative complexities of their political systems, and why we observe certain types patterns in electoral outcomes. The course concludes with a unit on political knowledge in context.

**Requirements and Expectations:**

Students are expected to attend seminar having completed all of the readings. The assigned materials must be read before class on the date listed in the syllabus (the readings are often quite difficult, so budget your time appropriately). Seminar will be a mixture of lecture, student presentations, and discussion and will be based on the assumption that students have completed the reading for that day and are able to analyze the content. Please note that the plurality of our time together in class will be spent on discussion and 20% of the grade is participation.

**General Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for Political Science:**

1. An understanding of the processes, theories, and empirical regularities of political institutions and political behavior in the students chosen emphasis area: American politics, comparative politics, or international relations.
2. An ability to employ critical thinking and demonstrate social scientific literacy, including basic quantitative literacy.
3. A capacity to utilize contemporary social science research methods to conduct rigorous research on political phenomena.
4. Effective written communication skills, especially the ability to convey complex concepts and information in a clear and concise manner.

5. An ability to apply abstract theory and research methods to understand contemporary political events and public policies.

**Intended Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):**

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Communicate a thorough theoretical understanding of the structure and operation of electoral institutions (corresponds to PLOs 1 and 4, listed above).
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the central questions, theories, approaches, and findings in comparative behavioral research (corresponds to PLO 1).
3. Comprehend and critique contemporary political science research on vote choice (corresponds to PLO 2).
4. Conduct basic but rigorous social science research on parties, voting, and elections (corresponds to PLOs 3 and 4).

**Evaluation:**

Grades will be based on four components.

- Seminar Participation: 20%
- Homeworks: 30%
- Midterm Exam: 15%
- Final Exam: 35%

**Honor:**

Exams and homeworks are to be completed individually with no outside help. Please refer to the Academic Honesty Policy here: <http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu/what-we-do/student-judicial-affairs/academicy-honesty-policy>

**Books:**

The following texts are required. I have no preferences over how the students acquire the books. They can be found used at a substantial savings and many of these books are assigned in other courses, so it is quite possible that these may be borrowed/purchased from other students. Note also that the Duch and Stevenson book is available electronically through our library.

- Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count*. Cambridge University Press
- Duch, Raymond and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2008. *The Economic Vote: How Political Institutions Condition Electoral Outcomes*. Cambridge University Press
- Powell, G. Bingham. 2000. *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*. Yale University Press

**Course Outline:**

**Tuesday, January 20**

Introduction

**Thursday, January 22**

Lijphart chapters 5 and 8 (on UCMCROPS)

**Tuesday, January 27**

Downs, Anthony. 1957. "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy." *Journal of Political Economy* 65: 135-150.

Listen to this [podcast](#)

An explanation of the spatial model.

**Thursday, January 29**

Cox Part 1 (chapters 1 & 2)

**Tuesday, February 3**

Problem set #1 in class review

Cox Part 2 (chapters 3 & 4)

**Thursday, February 5**

Cox Part 2 (chapters 5 - 7)

**Tuesday, February 10**

Problem set #2 in class review

Cox chapters 8-10

**Thursday, February 12**

Chhibber, Pradeep and Ken Kollman. 1998. "Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States." *American Political Science Review* 92: 329-342.

Cox wrap up.

**Tuesday, February 17**

Duch and Stevenson chapters 1 & 2

**Thursday, February 19**

Problem set #3 in class review

Duch and Stevenson chapters 3 & 4

**Tuesday, February 24**

Duch and Stevenson chapters 5 & 6

**Thursday, February 26**

Problem set #3 in class review

Duch and Stevenson chapter 7

**Tuesday, March 3**

Duch and Stevenson chapters 8 & 9

**Thursday, March 5**

Problem set #4 in class review

Duch and Stevenson chapter 10

**Tuesday, March 10**

Kayser, Mark Andreas and Michael Peress. 2012. "Benchmarking across Borders: Electoral Accountability and the Necessity of Comparison" *American Political Science Review*.

Chang, Eric CC, Mark Andreas Kayser, and Ronald Rogowski. 2008. "Electoral Systems and Real Prices: Panel Evidence for the OECD Countries, 1970-2000" *British Journal of Political Science*.

**Thursday, March 12**

In class, student led midterm review.

Midterms distributed. Due by 11:59pm Sunday, March 15.

**Tuesday, March 17**

Powell chapters 1 & 2

**Thursday, March 19**

Problem set #5 in class review

Powell chapters 3 - 6

**Tuesday, March 24**

Spring break

**Thursday, March 26**

Spring break

**Tuesday, March 31**

Problem set #6 in class review

Powell chapters 7 & 8

**Thursday, April 2**

Problem set #7 in class review

Powell chapters 9 & 10

**Tuesday, April 7**

Luskin, Robert C. 1987. "Measuring Political Sophistication." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1993. "Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First" *American Journal of Political Science*.

**Thursday, April 9**

Problem set #8 in class review

Prior, Markus, and Arthur Lupia. 2008. "Money, Time, and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Skills." *American Journal of Political Science*

Barabas, Jason, Jennifer Jerit, William Pollock, and Carlisle Rainey. 2015. "The Question(s) of Political Knowledge" *American Political Science Review*

**Tuesday, April 14**

Cox, Gary W. 2015. "Electoral Rules, Mobilization, and Turnout." *Annual Review of Political Science*

**Thursday, April 16**

Campbell, David E. 2013. "Social Networks and Political Participation." *Annual Review of Political Science*

**Tuesday, April 21**

Problem set #9 in class review

What is political knowledge and why does it matter?

A lecture on cognitive models and a roadmap of what people should know and why.

**Thursday, April 23**

Duch, Raymond M., Jeff May and David A. Armstrong. 2010. "Coalition-directed Voting in Multiparty Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 104: 698-719.

Fortunato, David and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2014. "What do Voters Know about Coalition Formation?"

**Tuesday, April 28**

Fortunato, David and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2013. "Performance Voting and Knowledge of Cabinet Composition." *Electoral Studies*

Lin, Nick, David Fortunato, and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2014. "Political Knowledge in Coalition Democracies"

**Thursday, April 30**

Problem set #10 in class review

Fortunato, David and Randolph T. Stevenson. N.d. "Heuristics in Context."

Fortunato, David and Randolph T. Stevenson. N.d. "Congressional Organization and the Shape of American Political Knowledge."

**Tuesday, May 5**

Student led exam review

**Thursday, May 7**

Final exam distributed. Due Thursday, May 14 by 11:59pm