

**Political Science 489:
Comparative Political Behavior**

**Instructor:
David Fortunato**

Fall 2016
Meetings:
Allen 1015
4:45pm

Office Hours:
Allen 2035
MW 1:00-2:00pm
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Prerequisites:

POLS 209 is required for registration.

Course Description:

The focus of this class is voting in the comparative perspective. We will cover the two dominant 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 class 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). Please note that the plurality of our time together in class will be spent on discussion and 20% of the grade is participation. That is, in addition to learning from the readings and the instructor, you are here to learn from each other. While the instructor may offer background information about how scholarly debates have evolved, he will only lecture minimally. As such, it is critical that you engage the material and your colleagues in weekly discussions. The class is designed to foster the open exchange of ideas. Being overly quiet is unfair to your colleagues, because you will have the opportunity to benefit from their opinions, but they will not have the opportunity to benefit from yours. So come to each class prepared to join the conversation. Your participation grade will be assessed based on the clarity and thoughtfulness of your verbal participation in the discussions during class.

Attendance Policy:

The University views class attendance as the responsibility of an individual student. Attendance is essential to complete the course successfully. University rules related to excused

and unexcused absences are located on-line at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on four components.

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

Statement about Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Statement about Course Materials/Copyright and Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The materials used in this course are copyrighted. By “materials,” I mean all products generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, web pages, podcasts, multimedia files, presentations, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless expressly granted permission.

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the Texas A&M University web site, <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/>.

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

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.

- 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

Learning outcomes:

Students should walk away from this course with an comprehensive understanding of the following:

- electoral institutions from a wide array of advanced democracies
- how electoral institutions shape voter knowledge and voter behavior
- how economic outcomes condition electoral outcomes

Course Outline:

Meeting: 8/29

Introduction

Meeting: 8/31

No meeting (APSA)

Meeting: 9/5

No meeting (Labor Day)

Meeting: 9/7

Lijphart chapters 5 and 8 (on Howdy)

Meeting: 9/12

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.

Meeting: 9/15

Cox Part 1 (chapters 1 & 2)

Meeting: 9/19

Problem set #1 in class review

Cox Part 2 (chapters 3 & 4)

Meeting: 9/21

Cox Part 2 (chapters 5 - 7)

Problem set #2 in class review

Meeting: 9/26

Cox chapters 8-10

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.

Meeting: 9/28

Duch and Stevenson chapters 1 - 4

Meeting: 10/3

Duch and Stevenson chapters 5 - 6

Problem set #3 in class review

Meeting: 10/6

Duch and Stevenson chapter 7

Problem set #4 in class review

Meeting: 10/10

Duch and Stevenson chapters 8 - 10

Meeting: 10/12

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*.

In class, student led midterm review.

Midterms distributed. Due 10/21 11:59pm

Meeting: 10/17

No meeting (midterm)

Meeting: 10/19

No meeting (midterm)

Meeting: 10/24

Powell chapters 1 & 2

Meeting: 10/26

Problem set #5 in class review

Powell chapters 3 - 6

Meeting: 10/31

Problem set #6 in class review

Powell chapters 7 & 8

Meeting: 11/2

Problem set #7 in class review

Powell chapters 9 & 10

Meeting: 11/7

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*.

Meeting: 11/9

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*

Meeting: 11/14

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.

Meeting: 11/16

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?"

Meeting: 11/21

Raymond M. Duch. 2001. "A Developmental Model of Heterogeneous Economic Voting in New Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 95:895-910.

Gomez, Brad T., and J. Matthew Wilson. 2006. "Cognitive Heterogeneity and Economic Voting: A Comparative Analysis of Four Democratic Electorates." *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 127-145.

Meeting: 11/23

No meeting (Thanksgiving)

Meeting: 11/28

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"

Problem set #10 in class review

Meeting: 11/30

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."

Meeting: 12/05

No meeting (Redefined day)

Meeting: 12/07

Student led exam review

Final exam distributed. Due Wednesday, 12/14 at 11:59pm