

The Citizen

Pol 599U, Spring 2013

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Class: Tuesday 6:25-9:05, Dooly Memorial 119
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 3:30-4:30 & by appointment

Description

This course will explore what the American citizenry wants from government and how it goes about getting it. We will consider the origins and consequences of mass opinion, and study why elected officials are responsive to public demands and why they sometimes are not. In particular, we will consider when and why electoral incentives induce elected officials to respond to latent constituent opinion, and we will study particular cases of organized efforts by citizen groups to compel elected officials to respond to their demands through interest group mobilization and social movements.

Course Materials

All the required reading will be made available on the Blackboard page for this class.

Grading

The course grade will be determined by the following:

- Weekly analysis papers (15 percent)
 - You will submit five “think pieces” (600 to 800 words).
 - * You choose the weeks you want to submit a think piece.
 - * The only explicit requirement for these think pieces is that they cannot be summaries of the reading.
 - * Approaches you might take in your think pieces include: comparing two or more readings or arguments, developing a novel interpretation or elaboration of a particular argument, applying a theory or argument to a novel scenario, evaluating the author’s argument¹, etc.
 - Your think piece should be submitted to the professor via email *on the night before the class meeting*.
- Midterm (35 percent)
 - Tentatively scheduled for March 7.
- Take home final essays (35 percent)
- Participation (15 percent)
 - Arrive to class ready to discuss the assigned reading.

¹If you evaluate an argument, you must take care to present what the author wants to achieve and how she went about trying to accomplish that goal. You can then discuss whether (and why) the effort was successful or not.

- Contribute to each class meeting. I’m looking for stable participation over the semester, so participating a lot one week and then not participating the next week is not a good strategy.
- In the (hopefully unlikely) event that students start coming to class unprepared, I will administer reading quizzes. My expectation is that this will be unnecessary but I will resort to quizzes if circumstances warrant.
- Note that you will be evaluated on your participation, not your attendance.

Course Policies

- Students are expected to be courteous and considerate of the instructor and one another. This consideration includes, but is not limited to, not engaging in activities that draw your attention away from the seminar – including sleeping, holding private conversations, surfing the internet, reading, doing homework, etc.
- Computers may only be used for taking course notes.
- Of course, the standard disclaimers regarding cheating, plagiarizing, and the Student Honor code all apply.

Reading Assignments

- January 17: Introduction to the Course
- January 24: Ideological Reasoning in the Electorate
 - Steel, Ronald. 1980. *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*. Transaction Publishers.
 - “Tyranny of the Masses” (pp. 211-219)
 - Lewis-Beck, Michael S. et al. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press.
 - “Attitude structure and the problem of ideology”
 - Kuklinski, J. H., and B. Peyton. 2007. “Belief Systems and Political Decision Making.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*.
 - Sniderman, Paul M., Richard A. Brody, and Phillip E. Tetlock. 1993. *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
 - Lupia, Arthur. “How elitism undermines the study of voter competence.”
- January 31: The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion
 - McClosky, Herbert, and John Zaller. 1987. *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy*. Harvard University Press.
 - Selections TBA
 - Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press.
 - “Information, predispositions, and opinion”
 - Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans Policy Preferences*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press.
 - Selections TBA
- February 7 and 14: Follow the leader? How voters respond to politicians’ policies and performance

Lenz, Gabriel S. 2012. *Follow the Leader?: How Voters Respond to Politicians Policies and Performance*. University Of Chicago Press.

Academic articles posted on Blackboard.

- February 21: Electoral Democracy

MacKuen, Michael, and George Rabinowitz, eds. 2003. *Electoral democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- February 28: American's Beliefs About How Government Should Work

Hibbing, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2002. *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs About How Government Should Work*. Cambridge University Press.

Mansbridge, Jane. 2003. "Rethinking Representation." *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 515-528.

- March 7: **Midterm**

- March 14: Spring Recess

- March 21: Democratic Responsiveness

Jones, David R., and Monika L. McDermott. 2010. *Americans, Congress, and Democratic Responsiveness: Public Evaluations of Congress and Electoral Consequences*. New and expanded ed. University of Michigan Press.

Academic articles on the formation of activist groups (posted on Blackboard).

- March 28: Citizens and the Pressure System

Schattschneider, Elmer E. 1975. *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Wadsworth Publishing.

Grossmann, Matt. 2012. *The Not-So-Special Interests: Interest Groups, Public Representation, and American Governance*. Stanford University Press.

- April 4: Activists and the Parties

Cohen, Marty et al. 2008. *The party decides: presidential nominations before and after reform*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cohen, Martin. 2005. "Moral victories: Cultural conservatism and the creation of a new Republican congressional majority." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of

Article on party networks posted on Blackboard.

- April 11: Media Politics: How the interests of politicians, journalists, and citizens shape the news

Zaller, John R. *Media Politics: How the interests of politicians, journalists, and citizens shape the news*.

- April 18: Ideological responsiveness and performance accountability

Fiorina, Morris P. 1981. *Retrospective voting in American national elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Academic article on elections and government performance.

- April 25: Wrap up

Academic articles posted on Blackboard.