

# POS 3204: Political Behavior

(Class Number 18984)

Spring Semester, 2019

Class: MWF 10:40AM-11:30AM

Location: AND 0034

**Instructor:** Dr. Chase B. Meyer  
**Email:** chase.meyer@ufl.edu  
**Office:** Anderson Hall 317  
**Office Hours:** Wed. 12-4pm & Thurs. 11-1pm  
**Course Website:** www.chasebmeyer.com  
**Department:** Department of Political Science  
**Department Contact:** <https://polisci.ufl.edu> (352) 392-0262

**Course Description:** This course covers a broad overview of topics under the heading of political behavior, which includes public opinion, political parties, elections, vote choice, and polling. The goal of this course is for students to understand how Americans form political opinions and ideologies and how these are then used to impact vote choice in elections. This course will cover a long history of political behavior in the United States as well as political behavior in other countries as well.

## **Required Texts:**

Leighley, Jan E., and Jonathan Nagler. *Who votes now?: Demographics, issues, inequality, and turnout in the United States*. Princeton University Press, 2013.

Soroka, Stuart N., and Christopher Wlezien. *Degrees of democracy: Politics, public opinion, and policy*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Jacobson, Gary C., and Jamie L. Carson. *The politics of congressional elections*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

**Readings:** At the end of every class period I will assign the readings for the next class. These readings should be completed before the beginning of the next class period. The readings will include chapters from the required books as well as other reading materials that I will put on the course website. For the additional readings they will be posted on the day they are assigned, giving students a full week to read them.

**Class Format:** This course is for 3 credit hours split over three days, Monday-Wednesday-Friday from 10:40-11:30AM. During class time students should not be on their cell-phones and while laptops are allowed for note taking purposes, students will not be permitted to use their laptops for any other purpose during the class instruction time.

## **Course Requirements and Grading:**

***Class Attendance:*** Attendance is mandatory, and I will take attendance every day of the semester. I will give each student one unexcused absence. After the first unexcused absence I will begin taking off points for any unexcused absence afterwards. If you have an excused absence (illness, death in the family, etc.) please talk to me and give me proof of the excused absence (a doctor's note for example).

***Participation:*** Participation is also mandatory. I expect students to participate in class discussions, to answer questions when asked, and to contribute whenever asked in class.

***Writing Assignments:*** Throughout the semester students are required to complete THREE writing assignments. Two of these writing assignments will be short 1-2 page response papers to that week's assigned readings/lecture. These are NOT to be summaries, but rather your response to the reading/lecture topic. What did you think about the readings or the lecture? Do you agree or disagree? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the readings? Was there something you thought was uniquely interesting about the lecture? These response papers will be due at the beginning of class. One assignment will be due BEFORE the first exam and the second one will be due BEFORE the second exam. If you wish to do both writing assignments before the first exam you are free to do so.

The third writing assignment will be due anytime before the end of the semester. This assignment will be slightly longer than the reading response papers, approximately 3-4 pages and will give students a chance to come up with their own research topic ideas. In this paper I want students to think as a political scientist would and come up with a question related to political behavior that they want answered. Why did Trump win in 2016? What is causing the rise of populist parties around the world? Why didn't more people vote in the last election? In this paper I want students to ask a question and then tell me how they would collect evidence to answer that question.

For example: If you are curious why Trump won in 2016 start your paper off by explaining why this question is of interest to you and why we should care about this topic. How would you then collect evidence? Perhaps you will interview voters? If so, what questions would you ask them? What do you expect to find? What do you think the result would be? This is your chance to be creative and explore a topic that you care about.

***Exams:*** There will be two exams given this semester, one at the midpoint of the semester and one at the end. Each exam will cover the topics and readings for that half of class. There will be no make-up exams unless the student has a legitimate excuse or talks to me before the exam is given.

**Miscellaneous:** Extra credit opportunities will be assigned throughout the semester, if you want extra points or to do extra work, these will be your opportunities to do so. Do not come to me at the end of the semester and ask for more extra credit chances, by that time you will have missed your chance.

Attendance/Participation	20%
Response Paper #1	10%
Response Paper #2	10%
Research Question Paper	10%
Exam #1	25%
Exam #2	25%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Grade Breakdown:</b>	<b>B+:</b> 87-89	<b>C+:</b> 77-79	<b>D+:</b> 67-69
<b>A:</b> 93-100	<b>B:</b> 83-86	<b>C:</b> 73-76	<b>D:</b> 63-66
<b>A-:</b> 90-92	<b>B-:</b> 80-82	<b>C-:</b> 70-72	<b>D-:</b> 60-62
			<b>F:</b> 0-59

**Instructor Availability:** I will hold office hours every week on Wed. 12-4pm & Thurs. 11-1pm in my office located in Anderson Hall, room 317. These office hours are subject to change and if any changes are made to my scheduled office hours I will inform the class. If you would like to meet with me outside of my normal office hours please email me at [chase.meyer@ufl.edu](mailto:chase.meyer@ufl.edu).

**Special Needs and Academic Honesty:** The University of Florida is committed to providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, a student should present his/her accommodation letter to me supporting a request for accommodations. The University encourages students with disabilities to follow these procedures as early as possible within the semester.

Academic honesty is of the utmost important in an academic setting like UF. You are welcome to study together but make sure the work you hand in is your own. I will not tolerate plagiarism or deception in any form. All work in this class is to be your own. Students who fail to abide by this policy, or who plagiarize, will receive a failing grade on the assignment.

**Course Schedule (subject to change):**

**Week 1: Topic – Political Parties**

**Mon. Jan. 7:** Class Intro and Syllabus Day

*Readings Due: None*

**Wed. Jan. 9:** Intro to Political Parties and the 2 Party System

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 1*

**Fri. Jan. 11:** Duverger's Law and Different Electoral Systems

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 1 cont.*

**Week 2: Topic – Political Parties Cont. & Ideology**

**Mon. Jan. 14:** Positions of Political Parties

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 2*

**Wed. Jan. 16:** Measuring Party/Politician Ideology

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 2 cont.*

**Fri. Jan. 18:** NO CLASS, DISTRICT WORK PERIOD

*Readings Due: None*

**Week 3: Topic – Political Behavior in Other Countries**

**Mon. Jan. 21:** NO CLASS, UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

*Readings Due: None*

**Wed. Jan. 23:** Parties and Party Ideology in Other Countries

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 3*

**Fri. Jan. 25:** Voting and Party Systems in Other Countries

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 3 cont.*

**Week 4: Topic – Polarization and the Big Sort**

**Mon. Jan. 28:** Polarization and It's Causes

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 4*

**Wed. Jan. 30:** Polarization and It's Causes cont.

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 4 cont.*

**Fri. Feb. 1:** Sorting and the Big Sort

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 5*

**Week 5: Topic – Vote Choice**

**Mon. Feb. 4:** Party Identification and Voting

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 5 cont.*

**Wed. Feb 6:** Who Voted for Who, 2012/2016

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 6*

**Fri. Feb. 8:** Who Voted for Who, 2012/2016 cont.

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 6 cont.*

**Week 6: Topic – Turnout/Who Votes?**

**Mon. Feb. 11:** Who Votes Today and the 'D' Term

*Readings Due: Who Votes Now? Chap. 7*

**Wed. Feb. 13:** Voting Rates

*Readings Due:* Who Votes Now? Chap. 7 cont.  
**Fri. Feb. 15:** Voter ID Laws  
*Readings Due:* None

**Week 7: Topic – The Act of Voting**

**Mon. Feb. 18:** 2000 Election and Bad Ballots  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 1  
**Wed. Feb. 20:** Ballots and Ballot Order  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 1 cont.  
**Fri. Feb. 22:** Other Ballot Types  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 2

**Week 8: Topic – Movie Week & Exam**

**Mon. Feb. 25:** EXAM 1  
*Readings Due:* None  
**Wed. Feb. 27:** Movie Day 1  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 2 cont.  
**Fri. Mar. 1:** Movie Day 2  
*Readings Due:* None

**Week 9: Topic – SPRING BREAK**

**Mon. Mar. 4:** NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK  
*Readings Due:* None  
**Wed. Mar. 6:** NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK  
*Readings Due:* None  
**Fri. Mar. 8:** NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK  
*Readings Due:* None

**Week 10: Topic – Presidential Elections**

**Mon. Mar. 11:** The Electoral College  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 3  
**Wed. Mar. 13:** Swing States and the Convention  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 3 cont.  
**Fri. Mar. 15:** Presidential Primaries  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 4

**Week 11: Topic – Congressional Elections**

**Mon. Mar. 18:** Congressional Primaries and Weird Elections  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 4 cont.  
**Wed. Mar. 20:** Midterm Elections  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 5  
**Fri. Mar. 22:** Governors and Presidential Approval  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 5 cont.

**Week 12: Topic - The Politics of Congressional Elections**

**Mon. Mar. 25:** Gerrymandering

*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 6  
**Wed. Mar. 27:** Re-districting  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 6 cont.  
**Fri. Mar. 29:** Winning Congressional Races  
*Readings Due:* The Politics of Cong. Elections Chap. 7

**Week 13: Topic - Polling**

**Mon. Apr. 1:** How Polling Works  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 1  
**Wed. Apr. 3:** Criticism of Polling  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 2  
**Fri. Apr. 5:** Polling and the 2016 Election  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 3

**Week 14: Topic - Public Opinion Part 1**

**Mon. Apr. 8:** Current Public Opinion in the US  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 4  
**Wed. Apr. 10:** Current Public Opinion in the US cont.  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 5  
**Fri. Apr. 12:** Attitudes and Ideology  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 6

**Week 15: Topic – Public Opinion Part 2**

**Mon. Apr. 15:** Opinion Leaders  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 7  
**Wed. Apr. 17:** Ideology of Voters  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 8  
**Fri. Apr. 19:** Ideology of Voters cont.  
*Readings Due:* Degrees of Democracy Chap. 9

**Week 16: Topic – Review**

**Mon. Apr. 22:** Review  
*Readings Due:* None  
**Wed. Apr. 24:** EXAM 2  
*Readings Due:* None  
**Fri. Apr. 26:** NO CLASS, READING DAY  
*Readings Due:* None