Political Science 516
Graduate Seminar on Political Participation
Spring 2005
Wednesdays: 2:00-4:40

Fredrick C. Harris
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Thursday: 3:00-5:00 or by appointment

Course Requirements:

This graduate seminar introduces participants to the modes, scope, and theoretical perspectives on political participation in the United States. We will also devote some time to participation in comparative settings as well as to participation in social movements and participation under severe constraints of economic and political oppression. Thus, the seminar considers participation in a variety of settings, from participation directed toward institutionalized politics such as campaign activities to participation in non-institutionalized activities such as disruptive tactics associated with social movements and “under the radar” activities more commonly viewed as the “weapons of the weak.”

Format: You are responsible for reading all the class material for the week and for participating in class discussions. In preparation for the seminar you are required to submit three questions on the readings each week which are due to me by 8 am the day of the seminar, but you have the option of submitting questions the day before. Although methodological questions are important when evaluating the papers, substantive questions should be equally raised when evaluating reading materials.

Requirements: In addition to consistent participation in seminar, you are required to lead-off discussion in the seminar on a rotating basis. These presentations entail a 15-20 minute presentation of the week’s readings. Grading will be based on participation (20%) and an original research paper (80%) that explores non-voting political participation using available data sets such as the Civic Volunteerism Survey, National Election Study (NES), the Roper Social and Political Trend Data Set, Social Capital Community Survey, the General Social Surveys, the National Black Election Studies, the National Latino Survey, or the World Values Surveys, among others.

Each student will also give an oral presentation of preliminary finds near the end of the semester. A 2-3 page research proposal with concise explanation of your ideas for the final paper should be presented to me by midterm.
Required Books:


January 12: Course Overview; Discussion of Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Trends

January 19: The Meaning of Political Participation in a Democratic Society

1. Schattschneider, All.

January 26: The Scope and Modes of Political Participation


February 2: Mobilization and Participation

Rosenstone and Hansen, All.
February 9: Race, Ethnicity, and Political Participation


February 16: African Americans and Political Participation


February 23: Gender and Political Participation


March 2: Participation and the Life Cycle


March 16: Social Capital and Civic Associations


March 23: Networks and Contexts

1. Brehm and Rahn, "Individual-Level Evidence of the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital, AJPS, 999-1023

March 30: Rationality and Participation

April 6: Social Movements


April 13: Participation in Comparative Settings


April 20: Covert Action: Resistance Beneath the Radar

Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance

April 27 Research Presentations