VOTING AND ELECTIONS

This is a reading, discussion, and research seminar intended to introduce you to the literature on voting, candidates, and elections, both generally and as it relates to legislatures in particular. There is an enormous literature in this field, and it is growing all of the time. Nonetheless, if we can get through this reading list, you will have an excellent foundation.

We have included on the list a few classic readings, but most are contemporary works that represent the latest theories and empirical work about voting behavior and elections as well as suggesting new directions for their study. Where appropriate, the material deals with public opinion more broadly and with institutional factors that influence elections. On occasion we will deal with comparative studies.

You should finish the course with a comprehensive understanding of past research and a good idea of the directions in which that research is now moving.

TEXTS:

REQUIREMENTS:
1. You will be responsible for the numbered readings as assigned in class.
2. You will be expected to participate in class discussions.
3. You should submit two relatively specific questions on the readings for each week (except week 1). The questions may involve either the substance or the methodology. Questions are due by 8 a.m. on the day of class, but handing them in the day before would be appreciated. E-mail submission is fine.
4. There is a research paper due at the end of the course. The paper will be discussed in class and in individual meetings. Note, however, that we expect to see a draft, which we will critique, as well as the final copy.
5. Periodically, you will be expected to lead a discussion of selected work.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

I. Course Overview; Historical Perspective and Current Trends in Voting Research

II. Political Information

III. Representation

IV. Issues, Candidates, and the Vote
1. *Controversies*, ch. 10.

V. Democratic Support
2. Dalton, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices*, chs. 1-2 (remaining chapters to be divided up for individual reports).

VI. Candidate Polarization

VII. Partisanship
2. Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, Partisan Hearts and Minds, chs. 3-4 (remaining chapters to be divided up for individual reports).

VIII. Strategic Politicians and Candidate Emergence

IX. Economic Factors and Voting
X. Incumbency Effect


XI. Congressional and State Legislative Voting

8. Carey, Niemi, & Powell, Term Limits in the State Legislatures, ch. 5.

XII. Money In Elections


**Some topics not covered**

Turnout (and participation more broadly)
- Decline in turnout
- Reporting errors (e.g., overreporting turnout)
- Changes in types of participation over time
- Effects of contacting
- Effect of full turnout

Voting equipment
- Variations in availability
- Effects of different kinds (e.g., on roll-off)
- Effects of ballot position

Electoral laws
- Party development (esp. in new democracies)

Historical Studies
- Turnout
- Voting processes
- Partisan intensity

**Possible paper topics**

Many topics involving content analyses of newspapers
Social studies course work (HSTS)
Effects of parents on offspring (School study)
College student voting
State and congressional elections: variations across states and constituencies; trends in and reasons for uncontested seats, including, for example, term limits in elections
Comparative work: Eurobarometer data; World values survey; National election studies
Updating various analyses