

Elections in Developing Countries, PSC/IR 262 Fall 2020 Syllabus

Professor:

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Office: Harkness 320B
Hours: TR 1:30-2:30 (Online only)

Classroom & Time: Hutchison Hall Room 140, TR 9:40-10:55am

Course Overview

How do elections work in developing democracies? Do contexts that are specific to countries in the developing world have implications for the nature and operation of electoral politics therein? In this course we will explore a number of issues that have particular relevance for elections in developing environments, including clientelism and vote buying, electoral manipulation and fraud, identity-based voting, and electoral violence. In addition, we will consider how limited levels of information and political credibility affect both the operation of electoral accountability and the nature of electoral competition. In doing so, we will draw on examples from Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Lectures

Lectures will be in-person, with live transmission over zoom for online students. They will also be recorded for future viewing. Due to classroom size restrictions, students will be divided in groups, and only a few groups will attend at one time. My expectation is that students that wish to attend in person will be able to do so in at least 80% of all lectures.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. Readings come from recent academic work on the subject, and those are available for download at the library website. Book chapters that are not available for download will be posted on blackboard.

Readings are “required”, which means that any component of them could appear in the exams. The lectures will focus on the main ideas being presented by each paper. Many of the readings, however, are quite technical. Here are a few tips on how to better read academic papers in this course:

Focus on the main idea. What is the research question being answered? How does it fit in the themes discussed so far in the course? How does it relate to the other readings? These components are usually well summarized in the first few pages.

Background. Every paper has a section explaining the context for the case study (i.e., details of the policy being evaluated, details on the country in question, etc.). Read this part carefully, so you can understand what the researcher is doing. Do not dwell on specific events, but think about how information from the case study provides insight into the broader themes of the course.

Technical sections. The empirical methodology or the mathematical model, when present, can be quite challenging. Do not focus on this part. When necessary or relevant, I will provide accessible explanations during the lectures. In order to better understand

quantitative results in a paper, focus on the conclusion, where they should be summarized. Be prepared. If you do not read in advance, you might not be able to follow the lectures.

Assessment and Grading

There will be five exams of 4 questions each. The exams will be take-home. I will post the questions on blackboard the day before the deadline. Answers should be uploaded to blackboard until midnight of the due date. **However, only 2 of the questions will be graded, at my discretion.** Students will not know which questions are graded before the due date.

Please provide clear and concise arguments. **Answers are limited to 500 words each.** A good answer would include your opinion, based on a thoughtful analysis of the theory and evidence presented in the readings and lectures. The grade for students missing exams will be zero. If a true emergency arises, please contact me before the due date.

The scores on these exams will comprise 100% of your grade, and the material for each exam is non-cumulative, i.e., exam 1 corresponds to part 1 of the course, and so forth and so on. The weight of each exam in the final grade is as follows: lowest grade (5%), highest grade (35%), the remaining three (20% each).

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A 93-100

A- 85-92

B+ 80-84

B 75-79

B- 70-74

C+ 66-69

C 63-66

C- 60-62

D+ 56-59

D 53-55

D- 50-52

Fail below 50

Academic Honesty

Tempted to cheat? Don't do it. Students are encouraged to talk to each other about the readings, and to study them together, even after the questions are posted. The only exception is that students are **NOT ALLOWED** to share written answers. Each student should prepare her own answer for submission. Attempting to plagiarize someone else's work in the exam (and in life!) will only make your own answers to appear shallow, weak and unoriginal. If I determine that two answers display evidence of plagiarism, both students will receive zero in the exam. The university's academic honesty policy can be found at: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty>.

Anything else

If any of this is unclear or if there are other relevant details for your situation, please contact me sooner rather than later. If you have a disability for which you may request an academic accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both myself and the access coordinator for your school to establish eligibility for academic accommodations (please see <https://www.rochester.edu/disability/students.html>). I hope this course will be an enjoyable experience for everyone.

For W Students only

There will be a final paper of 10 pages, which will represent 25% of the final grade (the exams will represent 75% of the grade). The paper provides students with an opportunity to examine the topics discussed in class from the in-depth perspective of one or several empirical cases of their choosing. The paper will require W students to cite at least six academic sources not among assigned readings.

The topic is your choice, as long as it is somewhat related to the topic of this course (I am not too restrictive about your choice of topic). The paper should be comprised of three main components:

- a research question that you intend to examine. This is an introduction, the idea is to convince readers that your question is interesting and relevant.
- Context. Here you will, if necessary, provide enough information on the context of the question. For example, if your question is specific to a certain country and/or period of time. Some information on the context is required for the readers to understand the paper.
- a literature review on the topic, summarizing what other people have said about the question you've posed. This is the body of the paper.
- your personal view on the subject. This is more or less like a conclusion, where you comment on the answers provided by the literature you've reviewed, and contribute with your thoughts.

The paper should be written in font size 12, one-half spacing, no more than 10 pages including a page with bibliographical references at the end (cover page does not count). In the text, you should cite at least 6 academic works that are not part of the literature being reviewed in the lectures. In the text, cite using the following format (Frey, 2019), and include the full reference in the bibliography.

Deadlines:

Anytime before **Oct 15, 2020** w-students should talk to me about their proposed idea for the paper.

Nov 30, 2020. A first draft of the paper is due, by email. After that, we'll get together to discuss potential improvements for the final version.

Dec 13, 2020. The final version is due, by email.