Required texts:

Note: Erikson-Tedin is not a required text *per se*. It is listed here more as a reference that provides general background material on many of the topics covered in this course.

Other books that you might find useful:

Most book titles listed throughout this syllabus have been placed on 2-hour reserve at Smathers Library, though a few (Ellis and Stimson, for example) are available only as e-books. Most articles are available via the Smathers Library e-journal link (www.uflib.ufl.edu), or off-campus with your gatorlink account at www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufproxy.html. Selected book chapters can be accessed through UF e-Learning Support Services at https://lss.at.ufl.edu/.

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the academic literature and major controversies regarding public opinion, voting behavior, and political participation – primarily, though not exclusively, in the United States. For example: How much do ordinary citizens know about politics and government? How complete is their understanding of important issues, and to what extent do preferences on those issues guide their voting choices? Why don’t more Americans participate in politics, either at the polls or in other ways? Do low participation rates mean that the United States (or any other country) is less “democratic” than its citizens would like to believe? Why have citizens become increasingly mistrustful of their governmental leaders and institutions? These are only a few of the questions that will be examined over the next few months.

Your grade will be determined according to the following criteria:
Part I. Attendance and participation (25 percent). Attendance matters, since you cannot participate if you’re not in class. However, the largest portion of this grade will reflect whether students make an informed (showing familiarity with assigned readings) contribution to class discussions.

Part II. Weekly essays (25 percent). Each student will complete six essays (each approximately 500 words in length) based on the last twelve topics (#3 through #14) outlined below. These essays should do one of the following:

- provide a theoretical overview linking several (though not necessarily all) of the week’s readings;
- identify a question left unanswered by the week’s readings, and briefly suggest what kind of research might be done to fill in the blanks;
- provide a methodological critique of one or more of the week’s readings; or
- discuss findings from studies of U.S. political behavior in a comparative context and/or vice versa.

Don’t lose track of where you stand (in terms of meeting the quota of six) because there will be no opportunities for extra credit at the end.

Note: It is expected that all essays will represent original work by students (or, when the work of others is referenced, be properly cited). To ensure that this is the case, essays must be submitted to an online plagiarism service called turnitin.com. Here is how it works:

The first step is that you need to create a student profile:
1. go to www.turnitin.com
2. click on create user profile
3. fill in your personal email address
4. fill in your personal password
5. type of user: choose student
6. enter class ID (7427665) and password (behavior)
7. follow instructions

To log in after creating profile:
1. enter your personal email and password in the box on the upper right hand corner of the homepage www.turnitin.com
2. click on POS 6207 Political Behavior
3. from there you can submit your paper just like adding an attachment to an email.
4. be sure to get an electronic receipt; this will ensure that you are not penalized in the event that your essay is not properly logged in (no, it doesn’t happen often – but it happens).

Each essay has its own assignment folder. The procedure that you should follow is to (1) give me a hard copy of your essay during class on the specified date; and (2) submit an electronic copy to turnitin.com before 8 p.m. that same day. Any assignment that is late (either hard copy or electronic) will be docked a minimum of one letter grade. Any assignment that does not constitute original work by the author will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct.
Part III. Paper/Exam/Teach/Memo. Each student also is required to do *any two of the following* (25 percent each, for a combined total of 50 percent):

- Write a term paper, approximately 12-15 pages in length, that reviews some topic of your own choosing (selected in consultation with me), develops interesting hypotheses relating to that topic, and provides the outline of a research project appropriate for testing those hypotheses. The paper is due at noon on Friday, April 25. (Note: For some of you, especially the ph.d. types, the paper you do here can serve as the first stage of a project that you will further develop – and perhaps actually execute – in another seminar or at the dissertation stage. With that possibility in mind, you should feel free to consult with other professors about your topic, as appropriate.)

- Complete a written take-home exam, based on material covered in class. There will be two questions similar to what students might see on a ph.d. qualifying exam in political behavior. Questions will be sent to students via email at noon on Wednesday, April 23, and answers are due by noon on Friday, April 25.

- Teach a seminar (ph.d. students only), with performance evaluated by all participants in the class based on clarity, thoroughness, and insights provided on the topic of the day. Those who wish to pursue this option must (a) declare by Tuesday, January 21 which seminar they would like to lead; and (b) give me an outline of the presentation by noon on the day of the seminar.

- Prepare a campaign memo (campaigning students only), approximately 12-15 pages in length, that explains in layman’s terms how the political behavior literature informs some aspect of campaign strategy, tactics, or message. The idea here is to tell the candidate, *for example*, how the academic literature can help you (as general consultant) to (a) anticipate how certain kinds of people are likely to vote, and suggest ways of tilting the distribution of that vote in your favor; (b) understand or predict voter turnout, and how that might affect your campaign; (c) make smart decisions about how to utilize scarce resources (including but not limited to money); (d) shape your message for maximum impact; (e) deal with events, expected or unexpected, that might occur during the campaign; or (f) understand how the candidate’s strategic position (e.g., partisanship, incumbency, issues, primary challenge) affects his/her probability of success. This memo is due at noon on Friday, April 25.

Note: All term papers, take-home exams, and campaign memos must be submitted in both hard (to me) and electronic copy (to turnitin.com) by the date and time specified above. Failure to comply will result in a penalty of at least one letter grade, depending on the severity of the offense.

Students are bound by the UF Student Code of Conduct. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on written assignments, will suffer appropriate sanctions and be referred to university authorities for further action.
Any student with a handicap or special need should notify me (and coordinate with Student Services at 202 Peabody Hall) as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. Every effort will be made to accommodate your situation within the guidelines set forth by the university.

A class listserv has been established so that I can send you occasional announcements and keep you informed about any changes that might occur in the schedule. You are automatically on the list by virtue of being enrolled in this course. You must, however, be sure either to check the email in your gatorlink account on a regular basis, or to forward all gatorlink messages to an account that you use more frequently.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

Week 1 (Jan 7): Introduction: Let’s “Begin the Beguine” (Cole Porter)
“Politics is more difficult than physics.” (Albert Einstein)

Assigned Readings:

Week 2 (Jan 14): The American Electorate: Early Impressions . . . and They Weren’t Pretty
“Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent for appointment by the corrupt few.”
(George Bernard Shaw)

Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Angus Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order* (1966), Chapters 4, 5, 8.


**Week 3 (Jan 21): Voter Competence: How Stupid Are We?**

“I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crises. The great point is to bring them the real facts.” (Abraham Lincoln)

“Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects.” (Will Rogers)

**Assigned Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Perspectives on Politics (December 2007); Larry M. Bartels, “Homer Gets a Warm Hug: A Note on Ignorance and Extenuation,” Perspectives on Politics (December 2007).


Week 4 (Jan 28): Ideology: Beyond Red vs. Blue
“A liberal is a conservative who has been arrested.” (Tom Wolfe)
“A conservative is a liberal who has been mugged.” (Unknown)

Assigned Readings:
Erikson and Tedin, American Public Opinion, Chapter 3.

Recommended Readings:
Stephen C. Craig et al., "Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut, Sometimes You Don't: Citizens' Ambivalence about Abortion," Political Psychology (June 2002).


**Week 5 (Feb 4). Partisanship: It’s My Party and I’ll Cry If I Want To**

“Under democracy one party always devotes its chief energies to trying to prove that the other party is unfit to rule – and both commonly succeed, and are right.” (H. L. Mencken)

"The Democrats are the party of government activism, the party that says government can make you richer, smarter, taller, and get the chickweed out of your lawn. Republicans are the party that says government doesn't work, and then get elected and prove it." (P. J. O’Rourke)

**Assigned Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Week 6 (Feb 11). Political Learning: What Shapes/Moves Public Opinion?
“You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, ‘My God, you’re right. I never would’ve thought of that.” (Sean Connery)
“In all matters of opinion, our adversaries are insane.” (Oscar Wilde)

Assigned Readings:
Erikson and Tedin, American Public Opinion, Chapters 4, 5, 8.

Recommended Readings:


**Week 7 (Feb 18). Social Groups: Demography Is Destiny . . . Or Not**

“I am not a member of any organized political party, I’m a Democrat.” (Will Rogers)

**Assigned Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 8 (Feb 25). Voting Behavior: Just Another Pretty Face?**

"Vote: the instrument and symbol of a freeman's power to make a fool of himself and a wreck of his country." (Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary)

“We would all like to vote for the best man but he is never a candidate.” (Frank McKinney Hubbard)

**Assigned Readings:**

Recommended Readings:

Week 9 (Mar 11). Retrospective Voting: It’s (Usually) the Economy, Stupid
“Recession is when your neighbor loses his job. Depression is when you lose yours. And recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his.” (Ronald Reagan)
“Your federal government needs your money so that it can perform vital services for you that you would not think up yourself in a million years.” (Dave Barry)
Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Pamela Johnston Conover and Stanley Feldman, "Emotional Reactions to the Economy: I'm Mad as Hell and I'm Not Going to Take It Anymore," *American Journal of Political Science* (February 1986).

Week 10 (Mar 18). Polarization/Realignment: Can’t We All Just Get Along?
“Conservative, n: A statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal who wishes to replace them with others.” (Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary)
“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy.” (Ernest Benn)
Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Week 11 (Mar 25). Campaign Effects: Playing to Win
“Most elections are decided before the campaign even begins.” (James A. Farley)

Assigned Readings:
See Week #13 for additional readings on the effects of voter mobilization and campaign advertising.

Recommended Readings:


**Week 12 (Apr 1). Issue Opinions . . . Are a Dime a Dozen**

“I have opinions of my own, strong opinions, but I don’t always agree with them.” (George H. W. Bush)

**Assigned Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Week 13 (Apr 8). Turnout and Participation: How to Be a Good Citizen

“A low voter turnout is an indication of fewer people going to the polls.” (George W. Bush)
“Don’t vote. It only encourages them.” (Unknown)

Assigned Readings:
David W. Nickerson et al., “Partisan Mobilization Campaigns in the Field: Results from a Statewide Turnout Experiment in Michigan,” *Political Research Quarterly* (March 2006).

Recommended Readings:
Week 14 (Apr 15). Representation and Linkage: The Rulers and the Ruled

“Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.”
(Nikita Krushchev)

“Suppose you were an idiot and suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself.”
(Mark Twain)

“The word 'politics' is derived from the word 'poly,' meaning 'many,' and the word 'ticks,' meaning 'blood sucking parasites.' (Larry Hardiman)

Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, “Constituency Influence in Congress,” *American Political Science Review* (March 1963); reprinted as Chapter 16 in *Elections and the Political Order*.
