Why do people vote? Why don't they vote? This course examines research into voting behavior and political participation. There has been much concern in the past few years that citizens are disengaging from the political process, as shown by what had been a continuing decline in voter turnout at all levels of elections. This leads to serious questions of legitimacy. If fewer than half of all eligible citizens vote and a winning candidate receives 50% +1 of the vote, what can we say about mandates? About the power to govern? From a broader perspective, is the lack of voting diagnostic of a lack of all kinds of political participation? Are non-voters completely disengaged, or simply engaged in other kinds of political activities that they find more satisfying and more likely to affect their lives? Yet, recently, it may be that voting and other forms of participation have picked back up. The decline in presidential voting seems to have been reversed with 2004 and 2008. And the rise of various groups of activists suggests that perhaps more people are getting involved one way or another.

We will learn about some of the key literature on voting and elections, including a new book on the presidential nomination process, focusing on the role played by Iowa and other early states. We will also be part of the Rutgers-Eagleton pre-2010 election poll, helping to determine what should be on the survey and actually collecting the data. One of the best ways to understand voters is to actually talk to them!

My website is at http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~redlawsk. where this syllabus is posted along with other information which might be of interest to the class. Any changes in the syllabus will be posted at the web site. We will also use Sakai as the main location for online readings.

Requirements

Attendance and Participation

For this course to work well, all students must come to class prepared, having completed all assigned readings prior to class. I will generally provide an overview lecture for each area we study and then will expect class members to participate in discussion about the research we read. Your course participation grade will depend upon you completing the readings and participating in discussion. Attendance is expected; three unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

Research Paper

Each student will prepare a research paper on a topic related to voting behavior and political participation. This research paper may be a literature review of relevant work in the field, may be the development of a student's own theory or approach to some topic, or may be creation of a research design to test one of the theories of elections and voting. Those students who are well-versed in statistics may choose to actually
analyze statewide survey data that we will collect ourselves. The point here is that the papers may be wide-ranging; none of the above is meant to limit you, as long as your focus remains voting and participation.

You will have access to the data from the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll if you wish to use it for your paper. Please let me know as part of your paper proposal (See below).

The final version of the paper will be due the last day of class. You will be required to prepare an initial paper “proposal” which defines your topic and identifies at least five academic sources that form the beginning of your research on that topic. The proposal must describe the topic, explain why it is important, and summarize the five sources you will begin with, explaining what they are and how they will be useful to you. The proposal will likely be 3-4 pages long. It is due in class on October 5. I will be available at any time to discuss your paper proposal and progress with you personally.

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

You will participate in a survey research effort to collect data about New Jersey voters.

The polling project will require that you be “human subjects” certified if you are not already. The certification process is on-line and takes about two hours or so. Details on the process will be provided in class on the first day. Calling will require that you commit 16 hours of time during the seven days of our calling – this time will replace our in-class and reading assignments during that week. You are expected to complete at least 25 surveys during this time. Calling will take place at the Eagleton Institute of Politics Carriage House on Douglass (across the street from Hickman Hall). You will work in shifts of 4 hours at a time between 1:00pm and 9:00 PM during weekday/Sunday calling and 11:00AM and 7:00PM on Saturday. We will do all of our calling between October 21 and October 27 inclusive. You will be able to schedule your calling to fit your needs within the dates and times available and I will be as flexible as possible on scheduling.

Survey research is the key methodology for voting behavior research. Your involvement in this project will provide you with a clearer understanding of how survey data is collected and the challenges of doing so. You will also get to work with actual data about registered New Jersey voters.

Exams and Quizes

All students will take a Final exam. There will also be three short in-class unannounced quizzes during the semester. Unexcused absences on a short quiz day will result in a zero for that quiz.

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rutgers-Eagleton Poll Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short quizzes (unannounced)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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Required Books

Available at Barnes & Noble or New Jersey Books. You can also readily find these from online sources.


In addition there are required readings available online on our Sakai site as noted in the schedule.

SCHEDULE

PART I – VOTERS AND NON-VOTERS

SEPT 2 NO CLASS: AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION MEETING

Sept 7 Introduction, expectations, plan for the semester
Political Culture and American Democracy
Read: Flanigan & Zingale, Ch. 1

Sept 9 Who turns out to vote?
Read: Flanigan & Zingale, Ch 2
Nardulli, et al. in DiClerico, pp. 130-147. (Sakai)
Lijphart in DiClerico, pp. 148-152 (Sakai)

Sept 14 Who DOESN'T turn out to vote?
What are the non-voters like? Doers & Unpluggeds
Read: Doppelt & Shearer, Chs. 1 - 4

Sept 16 The rest of the non-voters: Irritables, Don't Knows, Alienateds, and Can't Shows
Read: Doppelt & Shearer, Chs. 5 - 9

Sept 21 Are voters dumb?
Read: Shenkman, Chs. 1-6

Sept 23 Are voters dumb?
Read: Shenkman, Chs. 7-9, coda, epilogue

Sept 28 Another view – gut rationality and heuristics
Read: Popkin, The Reasoning Voter, Chs. 1-4. (Sakai)
Sept 30  Should we just quit now?
    Read: Lau & Redlawsk, Voting Correctly, 1997 (Sakai)

Oct 5   Heuristics to the rescue?
    Read: Lau and Redlawsk, Cognitive Heuristics, 2001 (Sakai)

    PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

    PART II – VOTING BEHAVIOR AND SURVEY RESEARCH

Oct 7   Survey Research Methods
        Human Subjects and the Ethics of Research
        Complete Human Subjects Training before class today (Online)
        Read: Flanigan & Zingale, Appendix
        Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Research Methods in the Social
        Sciences, Ch 10 (Sakai)
        Seltzer, Mistakes that Social Scientists Make, Ch. VIII (Sakai)

Oct 12  Discuss content of the poll – what should we be asking about?
        Scheduling call training (October 19)

Oct 14  How to do survey research
        Read: Asher, Chs. 1 and 5 (Sakai)

Oct 19  Preparing for the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll
        TRAINING FOR SURVEY – MEET IN CARRIAGE HOUSE (Divide into groups)

Oct 21  During this week you will be participating in the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, calling
        for the pre-election poll. Calling will begin on Thursday, October 21 and will be scheduled
        so that you will call in four 4-hour shifts from October 21-October 27. We will not have
        class and you will not have readings assigned during this time.

Oct 26  Reviewing the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll – What did we learn about Survey Research and
        New Jersey voters?
        Read: Asher, Chs. 8 and 9 (Sakai)

Nov 2   Why is turnout low and does it even matter?
        Read: Niemi and Weisberg, Ch. 2
        Teixeira in DiClerico, pp 152-163 (Sakai)

Nov 4   What happened in Election 2010 and why?
        Read: Media reports on Congressional Election results

    VOTING BEHAVIOR: WHY DO PEOPLE VOTE THE WAY THEY DO?

Nov 9   Overview of voting behavior research: Some standard models
        Read: Niemi & Weisberg, Ch. 1 & 10
Nov 11  Partisanship and partisan change  
Read:  Flanigan and Zingale, Chs. 3, 4, & 5

Nov 16  Changes in the Party System  
Read:  Niemi and Weisberg, Chs 21, 22, 23.

Nov 18  Public Opinion and Ideology  
Read:  Flanigan and Zingale, Ch. 6  
Niemi and Weisberg, Chs. 6 & 9

Nov 23  What Determines the Vote?  
Read:  Niemi and Weisberg, Chs. 11 & 12  
Flanigan and Zingale, Ch 8

Nov 25  Thanksgiving Break

ELECTIONS: THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY PROCESS – WHY IOWA?

Nov 30  The presidential nominating system - The Iowa Caucus  
Read:  Redlawsk, Tolbert, Donovan; Why Iowa? Ch 1-3 (Sakai)

Dec 2  The presidential nominating system – Sequential Elections  
Read:  Redlawsk, Tolbert, Donovan; Why Iowa? Ch 7-8 (Sakai)

Dec 7  Debating a national primary  
Read:  National Primary, Pro and Con, in Debating Reform (Sakai)  
Redlawsk, Tolbert, Donovan; Why Iowa? Ch 10-11 (Sakai)

Dec 9  Wrap Up – What have we learned about elections and participation?

FINAL EXAM:  MON, DECEMBER 20, 12:00-3:00

Using Email and this class:

Please feel free to email me if you have questions at any time during the semester at redlawsk@rutgers.edu. I will try to respond to email questions within 24 hours.

IMPORTANT: Do not submit your assignments to me via email. Assignments submitted via email will not be accepted. Part of each assignment is attendance and participation in class on the day the assignment is due. If you are unable to attend class on an assignment due date then a paper copy of the assignment (non-electronic) will be accepted if accompanied with a documented excuse for your absence.