Big points

This is an upper level class on American elections and voting behavior. We will read a good deal of scholarly writing, not textbook pablum. And as a summer class with daily meetings, the pace will be fast. I strongly encourage you to keep up with the readings, and ideally get a head start over weekends.

Class will be in a “conversational” style. I’ll talk— one might say lecture— but I expect you to engage in an exchange about the readings rather than just copy powerpoint slides while updating your facebook pages. With a small class I’ll be looking for universal participation in a seminar style rather than a passive large lecture.

Readings

Given the short length of a summer course, we will focus on four very important contemporary books about American elections. After a first day on classic theories of voting behavior, we’ll read about 100 pages per day from four of the most important recent books on voting and elections. That is a demanding pace so keep up. Again, I urge you to read ahead over the weekends.

I’ve asked University Bookstore to stock these books, each of which is available in paperback. They are also all available in Kindle editions if you prefer slightly cheaper electronic editions. Note that you need the “expanded” edition of Gelman, which adds an afterword on the 2008 election which is not in the first edition.


• Larry M. Bartels, Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age University Press (February 22, 2010)
• Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart* Mariner Books (May 11, 2009)

• Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* Oxford University Press, USA; (April 1, 2013)

**Exams**

There will be two exams, on June 26 and July 11. These will take the entire class time. They will be equally weighted for your grade. In addition, grades may be adjusted in light of class attendance and participation for up to 10% of your grade. The exam format will be short answer and explanation of important concepts (about 1 blue book page each.) Exams will cover all material up to and including the day before the exam.

Exam 1  Wednesday, June 26
Exam 2  Thursday, July 11

Just a word of warning about keeping up. This is a tough course to pack into four weeks. You have to do the readings, which will take time, and be thoughtful about what those readings are telling us about elections. If you fall behind it will be very hard to catch up. Have I said that enough times yet?

**Readings**

**Monday, June 17: Theory of voting**


**Tuesday, June 18: Rich and poor, red and blue?**


**Wednesday, June 19: Polarized parties & majorities**

Thursday, June 20: Class politics

Monday, June 24: Inequality and self interest?

Tuesday, June 25: Who gets represented?

Wednesday, June 26— FIRST EXAM

Thursday, June 27: The power of place

Monday, July 1: The silent revolution
  • Bishop, *The Big Sort*. Part 2, Chapters 4-6, pp 81-158.

Tuesday, July 2: The way we live today
  • Bishop, *The Big Sort*. Part 3, Chapters 7-9, pp 159-220.

Wednesday, July 3: The politics of people like us
  • Bishop, *The Big Sort*. Part 4, Chapters 10-12, pp 221-306.

Thursday, July 4— No Class

Monday, July 8: Ideas and passions
  • Skocpol & Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. Chapters 1-2, pp 221-306.

Tuesday, July 9: Mobilization and media
Wednesday, July 10: The Tea Party and the GOP


Thursday, July 11— Second Exam