

# Political Science 3033

Voting Behavior and Public Opinion: CRN 84045

Brad Lockerbie

## Brewster D205

11:00-12:15 Tuesday and Thursday

## Office Hours

Tuesday and Thursday 12:45-1:45

Wednesday 9:00-12:00

and by appointment

## Required Readings

Aldrich, John H., Jamie L. Carson, Brad T. Gomez, and Jennifer L. Merolla. 2023. *Change and Continuity in the 2020 & 2022 Elections*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Asher, Herbert. 2016. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 9th edition. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Carson, Jaime L. and Gary C. Jacobson. 2023. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 11th edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Tokaji, Daniel and Robert Yablon. 2024. *Election Law in a Nutshell*, 3rd edition. Eagan, MN: West Academic Publishing.

*Style Manual for Political Science*. 2018. Washington D.C.: American Political Science Association. Available online at [APSA Style Manual](#) (accessed 2025-07-01).

## Course Description

Elections serve as a means of linking citizens to government. They provide a means of legitimizing governmental authority. This course will consider various explanations that have been

offered for American elections, especially those of the last seven decades. Theories of electoral behavior and current controversies in the study of elections will be examined. We will also be examining the linkages between voting behavior, campaign behavior, and the actions of elected officials. Note that we will spend time on both presidential and congressional elections.

### Course Goals

By taking this course, you will have a greater appreciation of how polling works, why and how candidates make use of public opinion polls. You will understand the various schools of thought that purport to explain why we vote the way we do. You will see how congressional and presidential elections differ, both in terms of candidate and voter behavior. You will see the importance of the rules of the game for winning the game of politics. Last, you will have the skills to examine political behavior in arenas beyond voting behavior.

### Learning Objectives

- Comprehend and explain how surveys are conducted, including sampling and questionnaire design, and how to interpret their results.
- Evaluate political science theories of how people form opinions and translate opinions into answers to survey questions.
- Understand—and reflect on—debates about the “competence” of the public and how much public opinion does (and should) affect public policy.
- Understand the connections between voters, elections, and democratic accountability.
- Understand the determinants of voter choices, including the different political science theories of voting behavior.
- Evaluate various theories of why we vote the way we do.
- Understand the dynamics of Congressional elections.
- Understand how political scientists study and analyze voting and elections and contrast their findings with the views of media pundits and campaign professionals.

### Assignments

Item	Date	Percentage of Grade
Quizzes	Unannounced	20%
Exam 1	September 30	20%
Exam 2	November 11	20%
Exam 3	December 15 11:00-1:30	20%
Final Project	December 9	20%

## Final Project

Stage	Due Date	%
Hypothesis	Sept 18	10
Introduction to paper	Oct 16	30
Revised Intro and analysis	Nov 18	40
Revised analysis + conclusion	Dec 9	20

Hypothesis: Plan of attack, Sources for paper with a brief summary of each. Make certain to use correct citation format.

Introduction: Brief summary of the research question, the literature review for your topic, the logic of your hypothesis a description of the data that are relevant, and how you will operationalize/measure the variable.

Revised Intro and Analysis: Revise the introduction to paper and examination of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Make certain to pay attention to earlier comments on Introduction when revising.

Revised analysis and conclusion: Again revise in light of comments and conclude the paper.

## Rubric for paper

Criterion	Excellent (10)	Good (7)	Fair (4)	Poor (1)
Hypothesis	Hypothesis is clear, precise, and testable.	Hypothesis is clear but needs more precision.	Hypothesis is vague or is not testable.	Hypothesis is unclear or not a hypothesis.
Argument for hypothesis	Argument is logical and supported by reasoning.	Argument is logical but lacks support or depth.	Argument is unclear or not fully logical.	Argument is weak or not supported.

Sources	Relevant, required number, and proper citation format.	Relevant sources with proper citation format.	Relevant but fewer than required number.	Required number not met.
Logic of Argument	Argument is logical, supported by reasoning.	Logical but lacks support or depth.	Unclear or not fully logical.	Weak or not supported.
Literature Review	References are highly relevant and clearly tied to hypothesis.	References relevant but synthesis could be improved.	Limited relevant references or weak connection.	Few or irrelevant literature cited.
Data Sources	Clearly identified, credible, appropriate for hypothesis.	Identified but not clearly described.	Vaguely described.	–
Variables	Clearly identified and coded clearly.	Identified but coding could be clearer.	Vaguely identified or coding unclear.	–
Testing Methods	Clearly and thoroughly described, feasible, and proper.	Described but lack full detail or feasibility.	Partially described or improper.	Unclear or not feasible.
Testing of Hypothesis	Tested rigorously with clear results reported.	Tested but analysis lacks depth.	Tested but analysis weak.	Testing invalid.

Analysis	Explanation is clear, logical, and addresses findings.	Clear but lacks depth.	Unclear and lacks depth.	Weak or unclear.
Revised Analysis and Conclusion	Responds to earlier comments and concludes the paper.			

### Grading System

Number grade	Letter grade	Number grade	Letter grade
93–100	A	73–77	C
90–92	A-	70–72	C-
88–89	B+	68–69	D+
83–85	B	63–67	D
80–82	B-	60–62	D-
78–79	C+	<60	F

Late assignments are not accepted except in case of dire emergency.

### Quizzes

Quizzes will be in-class. They may be given at the beginning, the middle, or the end of class. If you are not there for the start of a quiz, it will count as a missed quiz. The highest 75% of the quizzes (however many there will be is to be determined) will count. So, if there are four quizzes, the highest three will count. If there are eight, the highest 6 will count. If there are 20, the highest 15 will count.

### Examinations

There will be three examinations over the course of the term. These are designed to test your comprehension of material covered in readings and lectures. There will be three examinations consisting of short/medium answer and identification items over the course of the semester.

These examinations will draw from both the reading and the lecture. All of the examinations are cumulative.

### **Final Project**

Aside from the examinations, you are to write a research paper. In this paper, I want you to develop a hypothesis concerning elections and evaluate this hypothesis with the available evidence. Do not simply look for evidence that supports your hypothesis. Look for evidence regardless of whether it supports your hypothesis. This paper is to be much more than simply a summary of what others have had to say on a topic. If you simply do a literature review, you will not be happy with your grade. There will be more on the writing process as the semester continues. You will note, however, that there are several due dates associated with the paper. Aside from these due dates, you are **required** to meet with me about your paper. At each of these stages, you will receive a grade and comments on what you have turned into me. You are required to use the American Political Science Association Style Guide. Proper usage of this resource will be a component of your grade on the paper. The paper is worth 20% of your grade. The first stage of the paper is a proposal or a plan of attack. In this, you are to tell me what you are going to do in your paper. Specifically, what hypothesis, or hypotheses, are you going to be testing. Where are you going to get the information you need to test your hypotheses? Do not simply tell me political science journals or government data. If I write resubmit on your proposal, that means make changes to it and turn it in again. You will turn it in as a pdf file via Turnitin in Canvas.

Every effort will be made to get graded material back to you by the next class session. All students are expected to attend class. I expect all students to have completed the assigned reading by class.

## Course Outline

August 26.....	<b>Introduction</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Introduction
.....	Asher Chapter 1
.....	Tokaji & Yablon Chapter 1
September 2.....	<b>Nonattitudes</b>
.....	Asher Chapter 2
September 4.....	<b>Wording and Context</b>
.....	Asher Chapter 3
September 9.....	<b>Sampling</b>
.....	Asher Chapter 4
September 11.....	<b>Interviewing and Data Collection</b>
.....	Asher Chapter 5
September 16.....	<b>Media and Polls</b>
.....	Asher Chapter 6
September 18.....	<b>Polls and Elections</b>
.....	Asher Chapter 7
September 23.....	<b>Analyzing &amp; Interpreting</b>
.....	Asher Chapter 8
September 25.....	<b>Nomination Race</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 1
.....	Tokaji & Yablon Chapter 9
September 30.....	<b>General Election</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 2
.....	Tokaji & Yablon Chapter 10
October 7.....	<b>Results</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 3
.....	Tokaji & Yablon Chapter 7
October 16.....	<b>Turnout</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 4
.....	Tokaji & Yablon Chapters 2 & 3
October 23.....	<b>Social Forces</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 5
October 28.....	<b>Candidates and Issues</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 6
October 30.....	<b>Performance Voting</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 7
November 4.....	<b>Party Identification</b>
.....	Aldrich et al. Chapter 8

November 6	<b>Congressional Elections</b>
	Carson & Jacobson Chapter 1
November 11	<b>Context</b>
	Carson & Jacobson Chapter 2
	Tokaji & Yablon Chapters 4, 5, &6
November 13	<b>Candidates &amp; Issues</b>
	Carson & Jacobson Chapter 3
November 18	<b>Campaigns</b>
	Carson & Jacobson Chapter 4
November 20	<b>Voters</b>
	Carson & Jacobson Chapter 5
November 25	<b>National Politics and Congress</b>
	Carson & Jacobson Chapter 6 & 7
December 9	<b>Future of American Politics</b>
	Asher Chapter 9
	Aldrich et al. Chapter 13

**REQUIRED BY THE UNIVERSITY AND TEXT PROVIDED TO A LARGE EXTENT BY THE UNIVERSITY (I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK I PLAGIARIZED - ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE FIRST TOPIC)**

### **Academic Integrity**

The standard plagiarism and academic integrity rules apply, i.e. all the materials you submit in paper or online must be the results of your own individual work. Any signs of plagiarism will be taken very seriously. The university code of academic integrity will be strictly enforced in this course. According to the East Carolina University Honor Code, violations of academic integrity include the following:

**Cheating.** Unauthorized aid or assistance or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work.

**Plagiarism.** Copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and adopting same as one's own original work. **DO NOT** submit someone else's homework.

**Falsification.** Statement of any untruth, either spoken or written, regarding any circumstances relative to academic work.

**Attempts.** Attempting any act that if completed would constitute an academic integrity violation as defined herein.

For more information about university policies concerning academic integrity, please visit the web at Academic Integrity. If you violate the Honor Code you will be reported to the Academic Integrity Board for disciplinary action. The penalties for violating the university code of academic integrity range from having assigned an F for that assignment to more stringent measures such as failure, assigned grade of XF on the transcript, in the course and/or expulsion from the university.

## **Artificial Intelligence**

Students are allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools, such as ChatGPT or Claude) on assignments in this course if that use is properly documented and credited. Students should cite in the most correct format according to the APSA style guide.

If a tool is used in an assignment, students must name the tool and include a brief (2-3 sentences) description in a footnote of how they used the tool.

## **Students with Disabilities**

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Mendenhall 109, 252-737-1016.” Accommodation Information & Processes: <https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students/dss-guidelines/>.

## **Campus Emergencies and and Severe Weather**

In case of campus wide emergencies, you may obtain information about changes in the University class schedule by calling 252-328-0062. Please continue to check on Canvas for updates.

## **General Education Social Sciences Competency**

Courses in the Social Sciences introduce students to the study of the psychological, social and cultural dimensions of individuals and groups. Students learn to seek knowledge for its own sake as well as for its application. Courses provide students with the knowledge necessary to solve problems in the Social Sciences and in scholarly fields that apply the methods used in the Social Sciences. They introduce students to the theoretical, analytical, and methodological techniques and perspectives of Social Sciences that advance the understanding of individual and group behavior. Scholarly study in the Social Sciences provides students with the foundation for understanding real world problems necessary for meaningful participation in society. Courses in the Social Sciences develop the intellectual abilities, knowledge and skills that students need to become broadly informed, to participate in interdisciplinary scholarship, and to be successful in their professional specialization.

## **General Education Program Student Learning Outcomes for Social Sciences**

Students who have completed the General Education Social Sciences requirements can:

SO 1: Apply discipline specific knowledge in the social sciences to explain the key factors that shape social institutions, structures, and processes that shape human behavior and social interaction.

SO 2: Explain how cultural and historical contexts influence individual behavior, society or culture.

SO 3: Apply discipline specific theories and modes of inquiry in the social sciences to analyze social contemporary behavioral or cultural issues.

### **Continuity of Instruction**

If Canvas is not available, please submit your assignments via ECU email. I will ask you to resubmit it via Canvas once Canvas is operational, to maintain a repository of all coursework. Also, if Canvas is unavailable, I will communicate with you via ECU email.

### **Class Decorum**

I expect all students to exhibit a high level of courtesy toward each other. Please arrive on time and stay for the entire class. Remember, what the professor says in class is probably in the professor's mind when crafting the exam.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations by the instructor may be necessary.