

Political Science 4034-1 – Political Participation
Spring Semester/2022; Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:50 in 116 Stubbs
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Office Hours: by appointment for now

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to investigate the nature of political participation in America, or perhaps I should say, the changing nature of participation in America. A big part of the book, *The Good Citizen*, by Russell Dalton is that a generational change in the nature of citizenship has occurred. In general we will be concentrating on mass participation (voting, volunteering, activism, etc.) rather than elite participation such as running for office or giving money. We will begin by considering the role of participation in democratic theory, then examine civic and political engagement and why people participate. We will then look at consequences of participation with an emphasis on inequalities, followed by a look at where young people stand. In the second half of the course we will look at mobilization, the social nature of political participation and the role that deliberation plays in democratic theory and practice. We will also look at barriers to participation (voter suppression), new technologies and participation, and finally, take a brief look at social movements and protests.

I would like to follow the format of an extended research seminar. This means that we will meet to discuss the readings, not just to listen to me lecture, although that will be your punishment if you have nothing to say. You need not have more than a basic understanding of American government to do this. You also, of course, need to attend class and be willing to consider questions seriously within the context of the systematic study of political participation. Our readings and lectures will primarily focus on participation and civic engagement at the national level in the United States. Consequently, we will be keeping tabs on current events as they pertain to the topics we are considering. It is therefore in your interest to pay attention to these events through regular perusal of your favorite news sites. Be aware that many websites masquerade as legitimate news outlets, so be careful where you get your information.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for this course are four examinations, one paper assignment, and class participation composed of in-class writing and discussion. The dates for exams and papers are listed on moodle.

Exams: Four multiple choice exams will be given. The final is not comprehensive. These exams will make up 60% of your grade (15% each).

Paper: One 2500 word paper will be due toward the end of the semester. It will be worth 30% of your grade. There is a description of the paper assignment on moodle.

Participation: Class participation will account for 10% of your grade. I won't be taking attendance per se, but you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Participation will be composed of in-class writing assignments on random class days. These assignments will either test your knowledge of the readings that week or will assess your opinion on issues of contemporary politics. There will be a total of 10 of these throughout the semester and you must make at least 8 to receive full credit. Less than 8 will earn you points equal to however many of the assignments you complete. The assignments will be administered through an assignment button on moodle, so if you can't make it to class for some reason that day, make sure you check in to moodle during class time to see if a writing assignment is due.

You can also obtain bonus points by getting correct answers to the writing assignments (when they concern course readings) or by participating in class discussions. There will be no makeups on these in-class writings (unless directed by an official university notice) since I've already given you two free misses and you can do them from home as long as you check in during class time.

In summary, your grade breakdown is as follows:

Four Exams: 60%
Paper: 30%
Participation: 10%

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Standards of academic conduct are described in the University's Code of Student Conduct. By registering for this course you acknowledge your awareness of the Code, and your intention to follow the requirements of the Code. In short, don't cheat and don't plagiarize. Please see me if you have any questions about any aspect of the Code and how it relates to the specifics of this course.

TEXTBOOKS

The Good Citizen (2021 edition), by Russell Dalton