FOCUS

This course explores patterns of public opinion and participation in the American polity. It seeks to highlight factors that shape these patterns and to assess their consequences in terms of the formulation of public policy and the vitality of the American governmental system. The first half of the course focuses on American public opinion and how it affects what public officials do, in addition to what determines when, how, and if an individual engages in various forms of political involvement. In the second half of the course, the emphasis shifts to the impact of interest groups, political parties and, civic engagement among young people. Also, there is somewhat of a focus on the factors that promote activism and the biases they introduce in terms of what gets communicated to government.

TEXTS

Required:


Recommended:


There will be additional readings handed out during the course of the semester.

**REQUIREMENTS**

- Midterm Examination 20%
- Interest Group Project 20%
- Research Paper or Service Project 25%
- Final Examination 20%
- Class Citizenship 15%

The midterm examination and the final examination are both in essay format.

**CLASS POLICIES**

1) Students are responsible for all material covered in the lectures and assigned readings. You must read the relevant chapters before the lecture pertaining to those readings.

2) Failure to attend class tardiness and failure to participate in class discussion will negatively affect your grade in this class (class citizenship portion of the course grade).
3) Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be punished to the fullest extent allowable by the Academic Committee at the University of St. Thomas. (See Below)

4) Other than in exceptional cases of personal or family emergencies, no make-up exams will be given for students missing any of the regularly scheduled assignments during the semester. A reduction of a full letter grade will result for every calendar day late that an assignment is.

5) A grade of “I” (Incomplete) will not be given in this course except in the most extraordinary or circumstances.

PLAGIARISM

The following are some dictionary\(^1\) definitions of plagiarism:

- “The action of copying someone else’s idea or work or pretending that you thought of it or created it” (Collins).
- “To take words, ideas, etc., from someone else’s work and use them in one’s own work without admitting one has done so” (Longman).
- “To steal or pass off as one’s own the ideas or words of another” (Webster).

Plagiarism also includes\(^2\):

- “Double-dipping - This is submitting a paper or other assignment which had previously earned credit from another course.”
- “Text recycling - Reusing in a new assignment large portions of a previously submitted paper(s) or other written assignment (computer code, speech, etc.) without acknowledging their former use.”

Common student misconceptions on plagiarism\(^3\):

- “Many students believe that as long as a citation is included, they can simply appropriate portions of text from another source and use that text as their own writing.”

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\(^2\) Dr. Miguel Roig (University of St. Thomas Spring 2004 Faculty Study Day Speaker, January 12, 2004.

\(^3\) Dr. Miguel Roig (University of St. Thomas Spring 2004 Faculty Study Day Speaker, January 12, 2004.
• “Many are also confused as to what constitutes common knowledge believing that anything on the internet is common knowledge.”

Some General Tips to Students:

• Citation Guidelines
  - Common Knowledge: Did you look up the information? If so, then a citation is needed
  - An emphasis should be placed on proper paraphrasing (This will be discussed in greater detail when the paper topics are handed out).

• Student assignments should always be crafted and turned in with the understanding that the professor will be operating under the assumption that:
  - unless otherwise properly noted in the assignment, the assignment submitted is the student’s own.
  - the representation of their own or others’ work is accurate (e.g., data fabrication).
  - that the assignment turned in/presented is exclusive to that course.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS, LECTURES, AND EXAMS

August 23: Introduction to the course.

Part I - Mobilization and Participation in American Politics

Topic One: The Rise of Activation Strategies, Chp. 1 (Schier)

Topic Two: The Great Disintegration: From Partisan Mobilization to Activation, Chp. 2 (Schier)

Topic Three: Candidates, Parties, and Electoral Activation, Chp. 3 (Schier)

Topic Four: Interest Organizations and Electoral Activation, Chp. 4 (Schier)

Dr. Miguel Roig (University of St. Thomas Spring 2004 Faculty Study Day Speaker, January 12, 2004.)
Part II - Interest Groups, Political Parties, Civic Engagement, and Political Participation

**Topic Seven:** Introduction: Interest Groups and American Politics, Chp. 1 (Rozell, Wilcox, and Franz)

**Topic Eight:** Interest Groups and Political Parties, Chp. 2 (Rozell, Wilcox, and Franz)

**Topic Nine:** Interest Groups and Candidates, Chp. 3 (Rozell, Wilcox, and Franz)

**Topic Ten:** Interest Groups and Voters, Chp. 4 (Rozell, Wilcox, and Franz)

**Topic Eleven:** Evaluating the Role of Interest Groups in Elections, Chp. 5 (Rozell, Wilcox, and Franz)

**Topic Twelve:** Citizenship and the Transformation of Society, Chp. 1 (Dalton)

**Topic Thirteen:** The Meaning and Measurement of Citizenship, Chp. 2 (Dalton)

**Topic Fourteen:** Forming Citizenship Norms, Chp. 3 (Dalton)

**Topic Fifteen:** Bowling Alone or Protesting with a Group, Chp. 4 (Dalton)

**Topic Sixteen:** Tolerating Others, Chp. 5 (Dalton)

**Topic Seventeen:** Is Government the Problem, or the Solution?, Chp. 6 (Dalton)

**Topic Eighteen:** Images of Leviathan, Chp. 7 (Dalton)

**Topic Nineteen:** In Tocqueville’s Footsteps, Chp. 8 (Dalton)

**Topic Twenty:** The Two Faces of Citizenship, Chp. 9 (Dalton) and Chp. 8 (Wattenberg)

**Epilogue:** The 2008 Presidential Election (Dalton); Initial Assessment of the 2012 Election

**Important Dates:**

No Class, Tuesday, October 11, Fall Break
Midterm Examination, Thursday, October 27

No Class, Thursday, November 24, Thanksgiving Day

Thursday, December 1, last day of class

Interest Group Projects are due on December 1

Research Papers or Service Projects are due on December 1

Thursday, December 11, Final Examination, 8:00-10:30AM

PAPER REQUIREMENTS

The paper must be 8 to 10 pages in length (graduate students 15 to 20 pages in length). It must be typed, double-spaced, paginated, and must use an academically accepted format for footnotes, citations and reference pages. A list of possible paper topics along with reading recommendations will be handed out next week. The topic, once chosen, will have to be turned in to the instructor on October 27. This will have to be accompanied by a brief bibliography. Since this is a research project, 6 to 8 sources must be cited, with at least four being from recent scholarly publications. In addition, periodicals, magazines and newspapers may be used. The major scholarly journals in political science are:

American Political Science Review
American Journal of Political Science
Journal of Politics
Political Behavior
Public Opinion Quarterly
American Politics Quarterly
American Politics Research
American Review of Politics
Legislative Studies Quarterly
Presidential Studies Quarterly
Review of Politics
Political Research Quarterly
Policy Studies Review
Journal of Public Policy
Policy Studies
Southeastern Political Review
State Politics and Policy Quarterly
State and Local Government Review
Polity
Party Politics
Examples of other sources are periodicals such as *The Brookings Review* and *Cato*; magazines such as *The New Republic,* *The Progressive,* and *The National Review*; and newspapers such as *The New York Times,* *The Washington Post,* and *The Christian Science Monitor.*

**INTEREST GROUP PROJECT**

Students are also required to research an interest group and its lobbyists either at the national or state level. You must pick one or two mobilization efforts that have been undertaken by this organization. You can contact and interview the lobbyists who were involved in this effort, or ask for copies of any documentation that the particular interest group that you chose have on that specific mobilization effort. This could include something as simple as mass circulation mail that they distributed to their membership. It will probably be easier for you to first peruse newspapers and magazines for high profile pieces of legislation that have worked their way through the Texas State Legislature or the United States Congress. Your analysis need not be long. Five to six typewritten pages should suffice. I will discuss this portion of the course requirements in more detail at a later date.

**SERVICE PROJECT GUIDELINES**

If you chose this option in place of the research paper, you will be expected to spend at least **15 hours** volunteering at an organization on a list that I will hand out later this week. Information about these sites will be on the aforementioned sheet. Requirements for the Service-Learning Project include the following:

1. Choose a site of interest to you.

2. Contact the site you have chosen. Arrange a visit with the person who will be coordinating volunteer activity for this project.

3. Take the contract to the coordinator. Have him/her complete his/her portion. You, the volunteer coordinator, and I will need to sign the contract before you begin your volunteer activity.

4. You will need to be prompt and reliable once your service has begun. You will also need to be prepared to perform the duties listed on the contract. See me if you have any difficulties.

5. You should keep a log of the times and days you are volunteering and your
volunteer activities.

6. After you have completed your volunteer activities, you will need to write a 8 to 10 page (approximately) reflective paper. In this paper, discuss the volunteer agency, your experiences there, what you have learned about the agency while you were volunteering, what you learned about yourself, how it pertains to the course material, and what you liked most and least about the experience.

7. Turn in your log and reflective paper on **December 1**.

8. A total of 100 points are possible for the combined paper and log.