

**Time:** Thu 14:00 – 16:00  
**Moodle Key:** [REDACTED]  
**Zoom-Meeting ID:** 698 311 434 63  
**Zoom Key:** [REDACTED]

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# Voters and Voting in the U.S.

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## Syllabus

### Course Description

This course aims at putting the 2020 U.S. presidential election in comparative and historic perspective. Students will be introduced to central theories of voting behavior, prominent empirical analyses of U.S. politics as well as important comparative studies. The course will be divided in three parts. The first is focused on acquiring a foundational knowledge of key theories of political behavior like the sociological and spatial models of voting. The second part will make use of that knowledge in order to explain events in U.S. politics. In this main section, we will analyze prominent trends that dominate current political struggles. The final part aims at putting the U.S. experience in a broader perspective. By the end, students will be familiar with key concepts in the comparative study of political behavior as well as with an analytical understanding of U.S. politics.<sup>1</sup>

Introductory reading:

- Evans, J. A. J. (2004). *Voters and Voting: An Introduction*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London; Thousand Oaks, CA
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Norpoth, H., Jacoby, W. G., and Weisberg, H. F. (2008). *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor
- Sides, J., Tesler, M., and Vavreck, L. (2018). *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*. Princeton University Press, Princeton

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<sup>1</sup>Please note that the course is focused on quantitative empirical research. Having completed basic statistical training is advised. The general language of communication is English.

## Requirements

### Active Participation 🗨️

Active participation is the cornerstone of this course. You are expected to have read all texts carefully and to engage in a critical dialogue about these readings. Beyond understanding the central claims of each text, try to assess the validity of the argument. How is it structured? What evidence is brought forward? And how convincing do you find it?

### Commenting ✍️

In preparation of each in-class session, every participant is required to post 2 comments about the assigned texts in the Moodle forum. These can be in form of open questions, dissenting criticisms or general observations. Relate to the remarks of other participants in their comments and response papers. The submissions are due by 12:00 noon on Wednesdays. You have 2 joker sessions where you can skip preparing comments.

→ together, 3 Credit Points

### Response Papers 📄

During the course, you will have to prepare 2 response papers (ca. 600 words), one before the holiday break and one in the new year. These will be focused on one text of any in-class session. Here you should first briefly summarize the reading, then analyze a specific point, and finally express your own opinion on the substance of the claims and approach chosen. You can also reserve one paragraph for putting the reading in context of the literature from previous sessions. Please upload them as PDF. The papers are due Tuesdays by 12:00 noon so that we all get a chance to react to it.

→ 1 Credit Point

### Data Sessions 📊

There will be two sessions without us meeting on Zoom. Instead, I will upload a video for each of these two dates in which I introduce you to a data set about U.S. politics. With this guidance you will then have to complete a Stata exercise. Please, help each another out and use the Moodle forum if you get stuck. Also check out the open Zoom sessions of the tutoring team at the Chair of Empirical Social Research. The assignments are due on Sunday after the respective data session.

→ 1 Credit Point

*Note:* Beyond commenting on our literature, I highly encourage all of you to use the Moodle forum to share your insights and additional material (as long as it is of high quality). The online format of this semester does not allow face-to-face interaction. But this does not have to mean we cannot interact with each other. Did you come across a newspaper article that fits into a recent in-class discussion or have you listened to a podcast that opens up a new perspective on a session? Or do you have questions that did not get answered in the course? Just share it and talk about it.

## Course Plan

### Getting Started

(1) **Introduction** ..... 5 Nov 2020

(2) **The U.S. Political System** ..... 12 Nov 2020


- Lowi, T. J., Ginsberg, B., and Shepsle, K. A. (2018). *American Government: A Brief Introduction*. W. W. Norton & Company, London; New York, NY, brief fifteenth edition, Chapters 5 and 6

### Part I: Theories of Voting

(3) **The Social-Psychological Approach** ..... 19 Nov 2020

- Evans, J. A. J. (2004). *Voters and Voting: An Introduction*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London; Thousand Oaks, CA  
→ Chapter 2
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Norpoth, H., Jacoby, W. G., and Weisberg, H. F. (2008). *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor  
→ Chapter 2

*Optional:*

-  Bartels, L. (2016). 2016 was an ordinary election, not a realignment. *Washington Post*


(4) **The Socio-Structural Approach** ..... 26 Nov 2020

- Lipset, S. M. (1960). *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Doubleday, Garden City, NY  
→ Chapter 7
- Abramowitz, A. I. (2018). *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump*. Yale University Press, New Haven; London  
→ Chapter 2

**(5) The Rational Choice Approach** .....3 Dec 2020

- Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Harper, New York  
→ Chapters 3 and 8
- Evans, J. A. J. (2004). *Voters and Voting: An Introduction*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London; Thousand Oaks, CA  
→ Chapter 5

**(6) Data Session I** .....10 Dec 2020

 Watch the video

 Upload Stata Exercise I on Moodle

**(7) (No Class)** .....17 Dec 2020

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

## Part II: Current Trends in the U.S.

**(8) The Deep Story of the Deep South** ..... 7 Jan 2021

- Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. The New Press, New York  
→ Part I and Part II, plus Chapters 9, 15 and 16

**(9) Attitudes towards Race and Immigration** .....14 Jan 2021

- Tesler, M. (2015). The Conditions Ripe for Racial Spillover Effects. *Political Psychology*, 36(S1):101–117
- Reny, T. T., Collingwood, L., and Valenzuela, A. A. (2019). Vote Switching in the 2016 Election: How Racial and Immigration Attitudes, Not Economics, Explain Shifts in White Voting. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 83(1):91–113


*Optional:*

-  Coates, T.-N. (2017). The First White President. *The Atlantic*


**(10) Social Identities and Affective Polarization** ..... 21 Jan 2021

- Mason, L. (2018). Losing Common Ground: Social Sorting and Polarization. *The Forum*, 16(1):47–66
- Iyengar, S. and Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3):690–707

*Optional:*

-  The Ezra Klein Show (Podcast): "The Age of Mega-Identity Politics" w/ Lilliana Mason

**(11) Data Session II** ..... 28 Jan 2021

 Watch the video

 Upload Stata Exercise II on Moodle

## Part III: Comparative Perspective

**(12) The Role of the Media** ..... 4 Feb 2021

- Foos, F. and Bischof, D. (2020). Tabloid media campaigns and public opinion: Quasi-experimental evidence on Euroscepticism in England
- DellaVigna, S. and Kaplan, E. (2007). The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122(3):1187–1234. Publisher: Oxford Academic


*Optional:*

-  Vox: "Fox News keeps breaking its own rules"

**(13) Female Representation** ..... 11 Feb 2021

- Anzia, S. F. and Berry, C. R. (2011). The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect: Why Do Congresswomen Outperform Congressmen? *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(3):478–493
- Saha, S. and Weeks, A. C. (2020). Ambitious Women: Gender and Voter Perceptions of Candidate Ambition. *Political Behavior*

*Optional:*

 Vox "Someday: The long fight for a female president"

**(14) New Cleavages in Europe** .....18 Feb 2021

- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(1):109–135
- Hobolt, S. B., Leeper, T. J., and Tilley, J. (2018). Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of Brexit. *APSA*, page 34

*Optional:*

- 🔊 The Transformation of European Politics Podcast: "The Transnational Cleavage" w/ Lisbeth Hooghe

## Wrapping Up

**(15) Reflections and Evaluation** ..... 25 Feb 2021

## References

- Abramowitz, A. I. (2018). *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump*. Yale University Press, New Haven; London.
- Anzia, S. F. and Berry, C. R. (2011). The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect: Why Do Congresswomen Outperform Congressmen? *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(3):478–493.
- Bartels, L. (2016). 2016 was an ordinary election, not a realignment. *Washington Post*.
- Coates, T.-N. (2017). The First White President. *The Atlantic*.
- DellaVigna, S. and Kaplan, E. (2007). The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122(3):1187–1234. Publisher: Oxford Academic.
- Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Harper, New York.
- Evans, J. A. J. (2004). *Voters and Voting: An Introduction*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London; Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Foos, F. and Bischof, D. (2020). Tabloid media campaigns and public opinion: Quasi-experimental evidence on Euroscepticism in England.
- Hobolt, S. B., Leeper, T. J., and Tilley, J. (2018). Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of Brexit. *APSA*, page 34.
- Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. The New Press, New York.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(1):109–135.
- Iyengar, S. and Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3):690–707.
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Norpoth, H., Jacoby, W. G., and Weisberg, H. F. (2008). *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- Lipset, S. M. (1960). *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Doubleday, Garden City, NY.
- Lowi, T. J., Ginsberg, B., and Shepsle, K. A. (2018). *American Government: A Brief Introduction*. W. W. Norton & Company, London; New York, NY, brief fifteenth edition.
- Mason, L. (2018). Losing Common Ground: Social Sorting and Polarization. *The Forum*, 16(1):47–66.
- Reny, T. T., Collingwood, L., and Valenzuela, A. A. (2019). Vote Switching in the 2016 Election: How Racial and Immigration Attitudes, Not Economics, Explain Shifts in White Voting. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 83(1):91–113.
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Tesler, M. (2015). The Conditions Ripe for Racial Spillover Effects. *Political Psychology*, 36(S1):101–117.