

**Government 374**

Fall Quarter, 2012

T/Th 9:30-10:50 a.m. (01) Morton 39

T/Th 11:00-12:20 p.m. (02) Morton 39

<http://jsettle.blogs.wm.edu/>

Blackboard Course Website

Facebook Group Page

**Professor Jaime Settle**

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Office Hours: Tuesday 4:00-5:30, Thursdays  
2:30-4:00, or by appointment

**Political Behavior**

Political behavior is the study of the way people think, feel, and act with regard to politics. This course is designed to touch on the major areas of research in political behavior, including public opinion, ideology, partisanship, participation, campaigns, the media, and polarization. Although many fruitful comparisons could be made in a cross-national context, we will focus on the American political system and will be primarily concerned with national elections.

The study of political behavior presents many intriguing puzzles. Millions of people vote in presidential elections every four years, even though any individual's vote will not affect the outcome of the election. Approximately 60% of Americans identify with one of the two major political parties, but a substantial proportion of people are unable to recognize the name of their congressional representative or know which party holds a majority in Congress. Democratic theory is built on the principle that citizens can make informed and rational choices, yet emotion influences our political opinions and actions. In this course, we will discuss these and other topics in the context of broader questions about political behavior, including:

What drives public opinion?

How sophisticated is the public's thinking about politics?

Can people make reasoned political decisions?

Why do we vote?

Do political campaigns and the media influence the electorate's vote choices?

The academic study of political behavior is a very different pursuit than the sport of following electoral politics. While we will focus on the empirical study of politics, given the timing of this course with an extremely interesting presidential election, we will certainly consider how our theories of political behavior inform what we read and hear about the 2012 election.

**Teaching Philosophy and Course Goals**

The subject matter of a course serves as a tool to help you develop skills to become a better thinker and communicator. The goals for this course are for you to:

*Ask good questions.* Learning necessitates curiosity.

*Assess and synthesize information.* Use the course material to arrive at informed opinions.

*Engage in analytical reasoning.* Respectfully discuss and deliberate ideas.

*Communicate effectively.* Continue to improve the skills necessary to write or present a clearly argued and well-developed discourse.

## My Expectations

I aim to make class worth your time, and I ask for the same in return. I expect that you will read the course material before the beginning of class and come prepared to engage in the discussion. I have posted a variety of handouts on my website which I hope will help you get the most out of the course. Attendance every day and active class participation are essential components of this class.

## Course Requirements

In addition to a midterm and final exam, you will have three additional assignments to complete. All assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the date indicated.

**1. Response Paper:** Write a 2-3 page response to a prompt I will provide. I am interested in seeing how you apply the theories discussed in the course to a real-world situation.

**2. Essay:** Limiting yourself to the course material, write a 5-6 page paper answering one of the questions provided on the handout on the course website.

**3. Independent Assignment:** You must complete either A or B.

A. Make one 8-10 minute presentation applying a theory from class to news from the 2012 election AND write one 5-7 page paper (15% for the paper and 10% for the presentation)

B. Write an 8-10 page term paper that asks and answers a question you find interesting extending from the course discussion or reading. You should come meet with me by the fourth week of class to discuss your topic. More information about this assignment can be found on a handout on the course website.

## Grading

I reserve A's for excellent work. B's are for solid, above-average work while C's are for work of average quality. D's indicate work that is below average, and F's indicate work that is substantially below expectations.

Response Paper	5%	September 13 <sup>th</sup>
Midterm	15%	October 9 <sup>th</sup>
Essay	15%	November 6 <sup>th</sup>
Independent Assignment	25%	Varies, see calendar
Final	25%	December 12 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup>
Participation	15%	Every day

I will collect assignments at the beginning of class. Assignments turned in during class after I have collected them from students will be considered late (5% deduction). Assignments turned in after class will be penalized an additional half-letter grade (5%) for each day (or fraction thereof) they are late until the maximum grade possible is a 60. Weekend days count. So, if you turn in an assignment after class but before midnight on the day the assignment is due, the maximum grade possible is a 90. An assignment turned in the day after the due date will receive a maximum score of 85; two days late will receive a maximum of 80; three days late, 75, etc. I will not accept assignments after the Friday of the last week of classes. Computer malfunctions will not be considered a legitimate excuse for the late submission of assignments, so plan accordingly.

In fairness to everyone, students who arrive late for an exam may not work overtime. The only

valid reasons for missing and rescheduling an exam are due to a documented illness, religious observance, death in the family (or similarly grave family emergency), a W&M-sponsored travel commitment that you have discussed with me before the exam, or, during final exams only (as W&M allows), you have several exams in a row. If you miss an exam for another reason you can take a makeup exam for which the maximum grade you can earn is a C (75%).

Extra credit will not be available. Consequently, it is imperative that you do your best on each and every assignment. I do not communicate about grades over email. If you are not in class the day an assignment is passed back, it is your responsibility to come to my office hours or make an appointment to pick it up.

If you are dissatisfied with your grade on an assignment, you can choose between two options. If you want to talk about your work and discuss ways you can improve on *future* assignments, I am happy to meet with you in office hours or by appointment. You cannot appeal your grade after we have this conversation. Therefore, if you are positive that you want to appeal your grade, you need to write a one-page double-spaced explanation of why you think your work merits a higher grade. After reading your appeal, I will re-grade your assignment. Your grade can go up, stay the same, or go down. We will *then* schedule a meeting to talk about your work.

### **Plagiarism**

I assume that students take the Honor Code and plagiarism as seriously as I do and that academic misconduct will not become an issue in this class. For any questions about policies regarding cheating, plagiarism, or other types of academic dishonesty, please see the William and Mary Honor Council's web site and the discussion of the Honor Code and plagiarism in the Student Handbook. I will initiate an Honor Council proceeding for any student whom I judge to have plagiarized any part of their work or to have cheated in any way, and at a bare minimum, I will recommend that the student receive an F for the course.

### **Course Materials**

I recommend that you purchase the following books, although there will be copies of the book available on reserve in the library. While they are on sale in the campus bookstore, I am confident sleuthing on Amazon, half.com, or abebooks.com will result in used copies at lower cost. I encourage you to get the current editions of the book as substantial changes have been made from earlier editions.

Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball, Eds. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.  
(ISBN 978-0-87289-467-9)

Green, Palmquist and Schickler. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters* (ISBN 978-0-30010-156-0)

Blais, Andre. *To Vote or Not to Vote: The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice Theory*  
(ISBN 9-780822-957-348)

Gelman, Andrew. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do* (ISBN 978-0-691-14393-4)

In addition to these two texts, additional original research articles and readings will be available via the course website on Blackboard.

## Readings and Calendar

### Books

- Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, edited by Richard Niemi, Herbert Weisberg and David Kimball (NWK)
- Partisan Hearts and Minds*, by Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist and Eric Schickler (GPS)
- To Vote or Not to Vote: The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice Theory*, by Andre Blais (Blais)
- Red State Blue State Rich State Poor State*, by Andrew Gelman (Gelman)

### Articles and Excerpts (available on Blackboard)

- Ahn, Huckfeldt, Mayer and Ryan. "Politics, Expertise, and Interdependence within Electorates." in *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, ed. Jan Leighley
- Alford, Funk and Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review* 99(2): 153-167
- Brady, Verba and Scholzman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 89(2): 271-294 (Optional)
- Campbell et al. 1960. *The American Voter*, Chapter 9 and 10 excerpts.
- Conover and Feldman. 1981. "The Origins and Meaning of Liberal/Conservative Self-Identifications." *American Journal of Political Science* 25(4): 617-645
- Editorial readings about NSF funding
- Gerber et al. 2011. "Personality and the Strength and Direction of Partisan Identification." *Political Behavior*
- Gerber and Green. *Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout*. Chapters 1-3.
- Gerber, Karlan and Bergan. 2007. "Does the Media Matter? A Field Experiment Measuring the Effect of Newspapers on Voting Behavior and Political Opinions." *Working Paper*.
- Iyengar, Peters and Kinder. 1982. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *American Political Science Review* 76(4): 848-858
- Jost and Amodio. 2012. "Political Ideology as Motivated Social Cognition: Behavioral and Neuroscientific Evidence." *Motivation and Emotion* 36:55-64
- Kuklinski and Quirk. 2000. "Reconsidering the Rational Public: Cognition, Heuristics, and Mass Opinion." in *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice and the Bounds of Rationality*, eds. Lupia, McCubbins and Popkin
- Lazer et al. "Computational Social Science" *Science* 323(5915): 721-723 (September 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Lau and Rovner. 2009. "Negative Campaigning." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12:285-306
- Lizza. Nov. 17, 2008. "Battle Plans." *The New Yorker*.
- Marcus and MacKuen. 1993. "Anxiety, Enthusiasm, and the Vote: The Emotional Underpinning so Learning and Involvement During Presidential Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 87(3): 672-685
- McCoy. April 10, 2012. "The Creepiness Factor: How Obama and Romney Are Getting to Know You." *The Atlantic Monthly*
- Newport, Saad and Moore. 1997. "How Are Polls Conducted?" Excerpted from *Where America Stands*, by Michael Golay
- Niemi and Weisberg. 1993. "How Meaningful is Party Identification?" in *Classics in Voting Behavior*, 210-234
- Oxley et al. 2008. "Political Attitudes Vary with Physiological Traits." *Science* 321: 1667-1670
- Popkin. 1993. "Information Shortcuts and the Reasoning Voter." in *Information, Participation, and Choice: An Economic Theory of Democracy in Perspective*, ed. by Grofman.
- Taber and Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755-769
- Zaller and Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 579-616
- Zuckerman. 2006. "Returning to the Social Logic of Political Behavior." in *The Social Logic of Politics*, ed. Alan Zuckerman.

## Course Calendar

\*Blue font indicates a due date for a subset of students

\*Red font and ALL CAPS indicates a due date for all students

	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
<b><u>I. Foundations</u></b>		
August 30	<b>Intro Day</b>  <i>Class logistics</i> <i>What is political behavior?</i> <i>Why do we study political behavior?</i>	Read one of these: Coburn Amendment Flake opening statement Stevens editorial  Read one of these: Cohen editorial Nature editorial
Sept 4	<b>The measurement and study of political behavior</b>  <i>How do we measure political behavior?</i> <i>What are the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to studying political behavior?</i>	NWK 4-18 Newport, Saad and Moore 1997 Lazer et al. 2009
<b><u>II. Political Orientations, Attitudes and Opinions</u></b>		
Sept 6	<b>Public Opinion</b>  <i>How do people form opinions about the political world?</i> <i>Do people have stable and coherent opinions?</i> <i>In what ways is public opinion malleable to survey effects? What are the implications of this?</i>	Zaller and Feldman 1992: read p. 579-586 and 606-612 skim p. 587-605
Sept 11	<b>Ideology</b> <b>Presentations #1: Ideology in the 2012 Election</b>  <i>What is political ideology?</i> <i>How does political ideology develop?</i> <i>Do people have coherent political ideologies?</i> <i>Does that matter?</i>	Campbell et al. 1960 Chp. 9 and 10 (pages 188-194, 218-227, 249-250, required; 227-248 optional) Conover and Feldman 1981, p. 617-625 Jost and Amodio 2012
Sept 13	<b>Party Identification (PID): Origins and Patterns</b> <b>RESPONSE PAPER DUE</b>  <i>What is the intellectual history of the concept of partisan identification (PID)?</i> <i>How do we measure PID? How does that affect our interpretation of the concept?</i> <i>What role does PID serve for citizens?</i>	NW p. 210-234 GPS p. 109-114

Sept 18	<b>PID as a Social Identity</b> <b>Presentations #2: Partisanship in the 2012 Election</b>  <i>Is PID a form of social identity?</i> <i>What evidence exists for the social identity explanation compared to more instrumental conceptualizations?</i>	GPS Chps. 1, 2, 8
Sept 20	<b>Innate Explanations for PID and Ideology</b>  <i>Is political behavior rooted in our biology?</i> <i>What are the implications of a biological basis for political behavior?</i>	Read 2 of these 3: Gerber et al. 2011 Alford, Funk and Hibbing 2005 Oxley et al. 2008
Sept 25	<b>The Role of Information and the Consequences of Informational Differences</b> <b>Presentations #3: Key Policy Issues in the 2012 Election</b>  <i>What kind of information do people have about politics?</i> <i>What kind of information do people need to make good political decisions?</i>	NWK 75-89 Popkin 1993
Sept 27	<b>Heuristics</b>  <i>What heuristics do people use when making political decisions?</i> <i>Do heuristics compensate for people's lack of political knowledge?</i>	Kuklinski and Quirk 2000 NWK p. 111-136
Oct 2	<b>Affect and Cognitive Bias</b> <b>CLASS DEBATE</b>  <i>How do people process the information they do receive?</i> <i>Does emotion help or hinder good decision-making?</i>	Marcus and MacKuen 1993 Taber and Lodge 2006
Oct 4	<b>Vote Determinants and Election Forecasting</b>  <i>What role does the economy play in vote choice?</i> <i>Does issue voting matter?</i> <i>How do political scientists predict election outcomes?</i>	NWK p. 167-181
Oct 9	<b>MIDTERM</b>	
<b><u>III. Voting, Campaigns and Elections</u></b>		
Oct 11	<b>Participation and Voting: Individual Factors and Institutional Factors</b> <b>Presentations #4: Institutional Changes in the 2012 Election</b>  <i>Which individual factors influence voter turnout?</i> <i>How does the institutional context affect voter turnout?</i> <i>What trends in voter turnout exist?</i>	NWK p. 23-35 Blais p. 17-21, 43-44, Chp. 2 Optional: Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Blais 22-42

Oct. 16	<b>Fall Break – no class</b>	
Oct 18	<b>The Calculus of Voting</b>	
	<i>What is the calculus of voting? How do voter perceive the costs of voting and the impact of their vote on the election outcome?</i>	Blais: Preface, Introduction, Chapters 3 and 4
Oct 23	<b>So why do people really vote?</b> <b>Presentations #5: Media spin on voter turnout</b>	
	<i>Why do people vote? Is rational choice a good framework to evaluate individuals' decision to vote?</i>	Blais: Chapters 5 and 6, Conclusion
Oct 25	<b>Campaign Tactics</b> <b>Synthesis paper due</b> <b>Term paper preliminary assignment due</b>	
	<i>What do campaigns do? Which tactics work best?</i>	McCoy "Creepiness Factor" Lizza "Battle Plans"
Oct 30	<b>Mobilization and Advertising</b> <b>Presentations #6 Campaign Strategies in the 2012 Election</b>	
	<i>When do GOTV efforts work? Why? Does negative advertising demobilize voters?</i>	Lau and Rovner 2009 Gerber and Green GOTV
Nov 1	<b>The Media</b>	
	<i>What evidence do we have that the media influences the way people think and act politically? What are the consequences of media bias, if it exists? Is the American media playing the role it should in a democracy?</i>	Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982 Gerber, Karlan and Bergan 2007
Nov 6	<b>Election Day!</b> <b>ESSAY DUE</b>	
Nov 8	<b>Election Redux</b> <b>Presentations #7: Exit Polling in the 2012 Election</b>	
		Read/watch election coverage
Nov 13	<b>Social Networks</b>	
	<i>What role do social networks play in our theories of political behavior? Does political discussion foster normative political outcomes?</i>	Ahn et al. 2012 Zuckerman 2006 Assigned ARPS article

Nov 15      **Special Topics**      Assigned ARPS article

*Work in small groups to prepare presentations on various topics in political behavior.*

Nov 20      **Special Topics**      Assigned ARPS article  
**SMALL GROUP PRESENTATION DAY**

Nov 22      **Thanksgiving – no class**

#### **IV. Polarization**

Nov 27      **Polarization**  
**Presentations #8: Polarization in the 2012 Election**

*What is polarization?  
How do we know if we've seen it?  
Have the masses polarized, or only the elites?*

NWK p. 221-37 and p. 266-296

NWK p. 242-265 (optional)  
NWK p. 297-318 (optional)

Nov 29      **Red and Blue America**  
**Term paper due**

*What is the cause of polarization?  
What paradox does Gelman seek to explain?  
Why is everyone so confused about polarization?*

Gelman p. 3-40

Dec 4      **The Consequences of Polarization**      Gelman p. 43-93

*What role do religiosity and income have on polarization?  
Is polarization a blessing or a curse?*

Dec 6      **Conclusions and Implications**      Gelman p. 111-136, 165-177

*What impact does polarization have on democratic outcomes?  
Who—or what—is to blame for the problems in our political system?  
Are Americans able to be responsible citizens?*

Exam      **FINAL EXAM**

**Section 1: Monday, December 17<sup>th</sup> 9-12 p.m.**  
**Section 2: Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> 2-5 p.m.**