

# Political Participation

POLI 202-01 // Spring 2016 // Carnegie 204 // MWF 9:40-10:40 AM

Professor Philip Chen // [pchen@macalester.edu](mailto:pchen@macalester.edu) // Carnegie 205

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30 – 2:30 PM

## Course Description

“Analysis of institutions and procedures such as parties and elections, and also informal activities such as social movements, interest groups, and community action.” This is how the college catalog describes this course, but what does this really mean? We spend the semester seeking an answer to the question “why do people get involved in politics?” Whether this is through traditional participation like voting, higher cost activities like volunteering for campaigns, or less traditional forms like running for office or participating in protests, students will explore the variety of reasons that people engage in political behavior.

This class will be particularly appealing for students interested in American politics in general, because it provides a strong background on the scholarly literature surrounding participation and helps to dispel common myths about voters. There are no prerequisites and the class is geared towards providing the foundation for future classes on political behavior, public opinion, and American politics in general. The class includes a congressional election simulation as well as a semester-long writing project designed to orient young students to the rigors of college writing and enhance writing for students with more experience.

As part of this course, all students are required to volunteer for a political candidate, political party, or political non-profit (such as the League of Women Voters) during the 2016 Presidential Primary season. Because of this requirement, this course fulfills the practicum requirement for the Political Science Department.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this semester, you should be able to:

- Describe and identify relevant factors that lead people to participate in politics
- Analyze political campaign strategies through the lens of these factors
- Apply these factors in a dynamic campaign environment

In addition to these specific learning goals, there are several skills that I believe are especially important for this course. By the end of the semester, you should have:

- Learned the fundamental principles and theories about political participation
- Developed writing and oral presentation skills
- Learned to analyze and critically evaluate different arguments and theories

## **Structure of the Class**

I will occasionally lecture on new topics or extensions of the readings. However, I do not plan on lecturing on the readings because a) you are expected to have read them already and b) I'm not witty or interesting enough to lecture all the time.

The majority of the class will be spent on discussion and activities that are designed to help you integrate the readings and materials. Please come to class prepared to discuss the day's readings, as this is a key component of this course. We will also spend a good amount of time applying and analyzing the 2016 primary through the theories we learn in class.

## **Office Hours and Help**

I strive to make this course understandable and accessible for all students. If you have any questions about the content or structure of the course or about specific assignments, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to help if you come to me before assignments or exams are due. Please do not wait to ask for help until after the due date, come talk to me before if you are struggling.

## **Required Texts**

This class will feature mostly academic books and articles. The required books are listed below and are available at the college bookstore or from Amazon or other places online. Readings are available on the class Moodle site at:

<https://moodle.macalester.edu/course/view.php?id=61>

Flanigan, William, Nancy Zingale, Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, and Michael Wagner. 2015. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate 13<sup>th</sup> Edition*. (Referred to as PBAE)

Green, Donald and Alan Gerber. 2015. *Get Out The Vote 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. (Referred to as GOTV)

Kaufmann, Karen, John Petrocik, and Daron Shaw. 2008. *Unconventional Wisdom*.

## **Course Structure**

The class will be a mixture of class discussion, small group work, and lecture. I am neither interesting nor witty enough to lecture for an entire class, and I'm more interested in what you thought about the readings than in listening to myself talk. Some days will feature more lecture, others will have more discussion, but always be prepared to offer your thoughts on the readings for the day because discussion is the primary form this class will take.

## Grading

Grades are based on five different components, described in more detail below. 45% of your grade will come from a final literature review (1) on a topic of your choosing. An additional 20% of your grade will come from two papers (2) written about your volunteer experience. 5% of your grade consists of participation in class (3), both in the structured simulation and activities as well as in daily discussion. 5% of your grade will come from a paper recapping the electoral simulation (5) and 25% of your grade consists of weekly reading quizzes (5).

Reading Quizzes (Top 8)	25%
Literature Review	
Research Questions	Required for Grade
Annotated Bibliography	Required for Grade
First Draft	Required for Grade
Paper Conference	Required for Grade
Final Paper	45%
Simulation Recap Paper	5%
Volunteer Paper #1	10%
Volunteer Paper #2	10%
Class Participation	5%

**Literature Review (45%)** – Each student will write a literature review (4,500-5,500 words) that identifies a specific research question surrounding participation in American politics. Many classes at Macalester culminate with a major research paper and you will all be required to do some type of capstone experience before graduation. It is my belief, however, that we as professors often do our students a disservice by treating the literature review portion of these assignments as little more than a formality or a hoop to jump through.

In this class, rather than writing a long final paper, we will spend a good deal of the semester writing and workshopping literature reviews to perfect the art of review and argumentation. A good literature review is neither a summary of prior research nor an all-inclusive list of everything written on a subject. Instead, a literature review begins with a research question and synthesizes relevant literature to make an argument. This may be different than what you have written in the past, but with your dedication to the practice of writing a literature review, the end product will be a concise piece of writing you can be proud of.

You'll notice a number of components marked "Required for Grade." These pieces of the literature review can be thought of as low stakes requirements. In order to receive a final grade on your literature review, you must turn in all of these components, even though your performance on these assignments does not factor into your grade. Failing to turn in these assignments will lower your final project grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each missing piece. For instance, if your grade for the entire literature review project was a B+, but you failed to turn in your research questions, your final grade for the project would be a B. If you were missing both the research questions and proposal, your B+ would become a B-.

**Weekly Reading Quizzes (25%)** – Over the past couple years, I’ve come to dislike the concept of midterm and final exams because they place a premium on memorization and intense study rather than a cohesive synthesis of the material we read. In essence, finals and midterms seem to encourage students to memorize minutiae instead of substance.

However, the readings for this class were chosen with intention and I believe they are important for students to get the most out of the class. I will not lecture much on the readings, as I believe classroom discussions are both more enjoyable and a better way for students to learn the ability to critique and challenge the works we read. In order for you to be prepared for these discussions, you will need to do the readings.

While I would love to be able to simply ask “did you do the reading?” and grade you on this, it seems unrealistic. On Wednesday of each week we will have a short, graded reading quiz. These quizzes will consist of a few multiple choice or short answer questions, as well as one or two longer (2-3 paragraph) questions that ask you to synthesize the readings in some way. I understand that sometimes things come up and readings don’t get done. Over the course of the semester, there are 9 Wednesdays when I will administer quizzes. This makes for an odd division of 25% of your grade. Out of these 9 quizzes, I will drop your lowest score. Of the remaining 8 quizzes, each will be worth 3% of your grade except for your highest quiz score, which will be worth 4% (for a total of 25%). While no one quiz will make or break your final grade, failing to do any of the readings will severely limit your potential in this class.

At the end of the semester, I will simply take your highest 8 quiz grades, dropping the lowest grade, and counting the highest quiz for an extra percent. Because you have 1 quiz that is not counted, you cannot make up quizzes for unexcused absences. However, if you are going to miss a Wednesday class and let me know ahead of time, we can make arrangements for you to take the quiz at a different time.

**Simulation Recap (5%)** – At the end of the semester, we’ll be holding a Congressional election simulation where you will each take on a role in the campaign. As part of this simulation, you’ll write a short paper (750-1,000 words) which incorporates the readings from the course and applies the theories to your observations from the simulation. I’ll provide more information about the assignment later in the semester.

**Volunteer Papers (10% each, 20% total)** – This course meets your practicum requirement because you are required to volunteer for a local election organization for at least 20 hours. As a component of this requirement, you will write two papers about your experience. The first paper (1,000-1,250 words), due partway through your volunteer experience, should apply the readings from the section “Who Votes” to your volunteer experience. In this paper, you will analyze which groups are most likely to support your candidate and which of them are most likely to turn out to vote.

The second paper (1,000-1,250 words), due after the Minnesota caucuses, should apply the readings from the sections “Getting Out The Vote” and “How Voters Decide” to analyze and assess the campaign strategy and targeting done by your group. More information will be provided about both of these assignments later in the semester.

**Participation (5%)** – The participation portion of your grade includes regular attendance in class, completion of in-class activities, participation in class discussions, and asking questions during lectures, as well as being an active participant in the electoral simulation exercise.

I'll advise you that I take the participation portion of the class seriously. I give very few A grades for participation. Thus, you shouldn't assume that simply attending class regularly is enough to get full participation. I grade participation holistically. If you are attentive in class, offer opinions and reactions to readings, and are engaged in discussion, you will do fine. But these are not simply "free" points for the class.

**Grade Scale:**

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	<60

**Grading** – On some assignments, you may receive a grade of B+/A- or something like that. This is just my shorthand way of assigning a number grade between two letter grades. Thus, an A grade is recorded in the grade book as 100 points while an A- grade is recorded as 92 points. If I think your work fell between these points, you may get an A-/A, which would be recorded as 96 points. So a A-/A is technically an A grade, but in the middle of the A range instead of the high end.

When calculating final grades, I always round up. So an 88.7% in the class becomes an 89% (B+), but an 89.1% would be rounded up to a 90% (A-).

**Course Schedule:**

**Days with reading quizzes marked with (RQ)**

Week One

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January 22            Introduction  
                              No Readings

Week Two

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January 25            Republican Government  
                              PBAE Intro  
                              Federalist #10  
                              Federalist #51

January 27            Republican Government (RQ)  
                              PBAE Ch 1

January 29            Who Votes? and Volunteer Update  
                              Rosenstone Ch 1 & 2\*

Week Three

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February 1            Who Votes?  
                              PBAE Ch 2

February 3            Who Votes? (RQ)  
                              PBAE Ch 3

February 5            Who Votes?  
                              *Unconventional Wisdom* Ch 6

Week Four

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February 8            Who Votes?  
                              *Unconventional Wisdom* Ch 7

February 10           Who Votes? (RQ)  
                              Rosenstone Ch 5\*

February 12           Getting Out The Vote  
                              GOTV Ch 1 & 2

## Week Five

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- February 15      Getting Out The Vote  
                         GOTV Ch 3 & 4
- February 17      Getting Out The Vote (RQ)  
                         GOTV Ch 5 & 6
- February 19      Getting Out The Vote  
                         GOTV Ch 7 & 8  
                         **Volunteer Paper #1 Due**

## Week Six

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- February 22      Getting Out The Vote  
                         GOTV Ch 11 & 12
- February 24      How Voters Decide – Partisanship (RQ)  
                         PBAE Ch 4
- February 26      How Voters Decide – Partisanship  
                         *Unconventional Wisdom* Ch 2  
                         **Research Questions Due**

## Week Seven

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- February 29      NO CLASS-VOLUNTEER DAY  
                         No Readings
- March 2            Super Tuesday Recap  
                         No Readings
- March 4            How Voters Decide – Issues and Ideology  
                         PBAE Ch 5

## Week Eight

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- March 7            How Voters Decide – Issues and Ideology  
                         *Unconventional Wisdom* Ch 3
- March 9            How Voters Decide – Issues and Ideology (RQ)  
                         *Unconventional Wisdom* Ch 4
- March 11          How Voters Decide – Groups and Social Networks  
                         PBAE Ch 6  
                         **Volunteer Paper #2 Due**

## **SPRING BREAK**

March 14, March 16, and March 18 – NO CLASS

### Week Nine

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March 21                      How Voters Decide – Putting it all together  
PBAE Ch 8

March 23                      Campaigns and Media (RQ)  
PBAE pg 221-232  
Iyengar\*

March 25                      Campaigns and Media and Peer Review  
PBAE pg 232-247  
**Annotated Bibliography Due**

### Week Ten

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March 28                      Campaigns and Media  
*Unconventional Wisdom* Ch 8

March 30                      Campaigns and Media (RQ)  
Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, and Valentino 1994\*  
Geer\*

April 1                        Non-Traditional Participation – Running for Office  
Pew 2014\*  
Fowler 1996\*

### Week Eleven

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April 4                        Non-Traditional Participation – Running for Office  
Lawless & Fox\*

April 6                        Non-Traditional Participation – Protests (RQ)  
Schussman 2005\*  
Eisinger 1974\*

April 8                        NO CLASS (PROFESSOR AT CONFERENCE)  
**First Draft Due**



Week Twelve

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April 11 NO CLASS (PAPER CONFERENCES)

April 13 NO CLASS (PAPER CONFERENCES)

April 15 NO CLASS (PAPER CONFERENCES)

Week Thirteen

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April 18 Electoral Simulation

April 20 Electoral Simulation

April 22 Electoral Simulation

Week Fourteen

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April 25 Electoral Simulation

April 27 Electoral Simulation

April 29 NO CLASS

Week Fifteen

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May 2 Peer Review  
**Simulation Recap Due**

Saturday, April 7, 8:00-10:00 AM  
**Final Draft Due (Free donuts in my office)**

## Course Policies

Attendance: Regular attendance is vital for your success in this course. However, I understand that sometimes circumstances prevent you from coming to class. Missing one class will not destroy your participation grade; missing several will.

Late Work: Assignments are due at the **beginning of class** on the day they are listed as due. Any assignments turned in after this time will be subject to the following late penalty: For each day late, I will deduct a third of a letter grade. So if an assignment is due Friday and you turn it in after class on Friday, a B+ paper would receive a B. If you turn it in Saturday, it would be a B-, Monday would be a C.

Assignments should be turned in using the Moodle system unless otherwise noted.

Grade Changes: Any appeals of a grade must be made at least **24 hours after** I hand back an assignment or exam. If you would like to appeal the grade you got on an assignment, prior to meeting with me you must submit a written statement detailing why you think your grade should be changed. I will then meet with you to discuss your statement and why you think your grade should be changed.

If I make a mistake in totaling your grade for an exam or assignment (e.g. I added the points up incorrectly) then you do not need to write a statement or wait 24 hours. Just talk to me after class or during office hours and I'll double check and fix the mistake.

Contacting the Professor: I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course, readings, and assignments. In general, quick clarification questions can be handled over email. More in-depth questions are best discussed in person during my office hours, where we can have an actual conversation. If my office hours conflict with your class or work schedule, I am available by appointment as well.

Please allow a full 24 hours for an email response. Often, my responses will be quicker than this, but do not send multiple emails about the same request until 24 hours have passed. I cannot guarantee that if you email me right before an assignment or exam that I will be able to answer your question in time, so please make sure and email me early if you have a time-specific question.

Extra Credit and Retakes: There is no scheduled extra credit in this course. You may not retake quizzes. There may be opportunities for extra credit, however.