

POLS 952: COMPARATIVE ELECTIONS AND PARTY SYSTEMS
SPRING SEMESTER 2009
M 1:00-3:50 P.M., 207 BLAKE HALL

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appointment

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This class focuses on the research process in a workshop format. The course's principal goal is to provide the support and collaboration necessary for each student to produce a paper that is ready for peer-review at an academic journal. We will discuss how to develop a research puzzle, identify a target journal, select an appropriate research method, and construct a high-quality manuscript.

During the term you will manage a research project, working with your colleagues who will provide constructive criticism through peer review of your written work and oral presentations. In the first half of the semester, we will review and discuss the research and publication process by engaging with some of the core literature in electoral studies and contemporary research that flows from it. In the second half of the semester, we will focus on constructing research papers that are ready for peer review at an academic journal. This part of the course will include workshop sessions and individual meetings to discuss and advance your research projects. The course will end with formal presentations of your projects and peer reviews.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. A coursepack available at the Department of Political Science.
2. Articles and other material assigned during the term.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You will be held responsible for all reading and classroom material. **The research paper must be submitted in hard copy and electronically. I will submit all papers to a plagiarism detection tool.** Failure to submit an electronic copy will result in a grade of "incomplete" for the course. If you would like to challenge any grade that you have received, you must submit a typed explanation of why the grade should be reconsidered before we meet to discuss a grade change.

Any student in this course who has a disability that may preclude demonstrating fully his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible. We will discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation in the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade will be based on the following components:

1. Research Paper (60%)
2. Peer Reviews (20%)
3. Attendance and Participation (20%)

Research Paper: You will compose a research paper that is ready for peer review. I encourage you to

further develop an existing research project, but you may begin a paper "from scratch" this semester as well. The paper constitutes 60% of the final grade.

Peer Reviews: You will provide oral and written peer reviews of your colleagues' work during the semester. Peer reviews constitute 20% of the final grade.

Attendance and Participation: Active participation in our workshop sessions, as well as in individual sessions, constitutes 20% of the final grade. Come prepared to class and your individual meetings.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a list of topics to be covered at each class meeting and the readings which should be completed in order to fully participate in class that day. While I give specific days on which certain topics will be covered, the calendar is subject to change:

Week 1 – 1/26: Introduction to the Course – The Publication Process and Electoral Studies

Reading:

1. Finifter. 2000. "Getting Started in Scholarly Publishing: One View of How it Should be Done." **CP**.
2. A. Wuffle. 1989. "Uncle Wuffle's Advice to the Advanced Graduate Student." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 22(4):838-839. **CP**.
3. Myers. 2004. "A Short History of Book Publishing for Political Scientists." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 489-490. **CP**.
4. Weingast. 1995. "Structuring Your Papers (Caltech Rules)." **CP**.

Questions: What are the main steps in the publication process? How do you know when a piece is ready to submit? How is the peer review process managed? How do you respond to reviewer comments and R&Rs?

Week 2 – 2/2: Core Theoretical Literature in Electoral Studies

Reading: Be familiar with the principles, assumptions, and expectations of:

1. Literature on Social Choice. You may find these principles outlined in:
 - a) Riker. 1982. *Liberalism Against Populism*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press.
2. Literature on institutional/sociological influences on party systems.
 - a) Clark and Golder. 2006. "Rehabilitating Duverger's Theory: Testing the Mechanical and Strategic Modifying Effects of Electoral Laws." *Comparative Political Studies*. 39(6):679-708. **CP**.
 - b) Colomer. 2005. "It's Parties that Choose Electoral Systems (or, Duverger's Laws Upside Down." *Political Studies*. 53:1-21. **CP**.
3. Literature on party origins.
 - a) Aldrich. 1995. *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **CP**.
 - b) LaPalombara and Weiner. 1966. *Political Parties and Political Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. **CP**.
4. Literature on policy choice/change. This literature is relevant for the discussion of election rule choice and its consequences.
 - a) Tsebelis. 2002. *Veto Players*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. **CP**.

- b) Andrews and Jackman. 2005. "Strategic Fools: Electoral Rule Choice Under Extreme Uncertainty." *Electoral Studies*. 24:65-84. CP.

Questions: What aspects of electoral studies illustrate the advancement of a "Lakatosian" research program and the accumulation of knowledge? Are the theoretical approaches that guide electoral studies equivalent to scientific theories? How does social choice theory inform influence the study of elections? How have Duverger's propositions influenced the literature? How well developed is the literature on party origins? How is electoral system choice explained?

Week 3 – 2/9: Finding a Puzzle

Reading:

1. Ferrara, Herron, and Nishikawa. 2005. *Mixed Electoral Systems: Contamination and Its Consequences*. New York: Palgrave. Electronic copy provided.
2. Moser and Scheiner. 2004. "Mixed Electoral Systems and Electoral System Effects: Controlled Comparison and Cross-National Analysis." *Electoral Studies*. 23:575-599. CP.
3. Maeda. 2008. "Re-examining the Contamination Effect of Japan's Mixed Electoral System Using the Treatment Effects Model." *Electoral Studies*. 27:723-731. CP.

Questions: What questions are "worthy" of investigation (and publication)? How does a puzzle differ from a research question? What puzzles inspired the work in the assigned readings? How did the authors address the puzzles?

Week 4 – 2/16: Finding a Niche in the Literature

Reading: I have assigned several review essays for this week. All are from the *Annual Review of Political Science*.

1. Benoit. 2007. "Electoral Laws as Political Consequences: Explaining the Origins and Change of Electoral Institutions."
2. Grofman. 2004. "Downs and Two-Party Convergence."
3. Lehoucq. 2003. "Electoral Fraud: Causes, Types, and Consequences."
4. Morgenstern and Vazquez-D'Elia. 2007. "Electoral Laws, Parties, and Party Systems in Latin America."
5. Scheiner. 2008. "Does Electoral System Reform Work? Electoral System Lessons from the 1990s."
6. Tucker. 2002. "The First Decade of Post-Communist Elections and Voting: What Have We Studied and How Have We Studied It?"

Questions: What are the major questions driving the literature in comparative elections and parties? What issues have been addressed well in the literature? What opportunities exist to improve this work? What areas have not been well explored and why? How could some of the unanswered questions be best addressed by researchers?

Week 5 – 2/23: Targeting a Journal

Reading: Select a topic and read at least one article about it from a journal in the 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and 00s. Potential journals include: *APSR*, *AJPS*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, *Electoral Studies*, *Party Politics*, *Representation*.

Questions: How do the questions, analytical methods, and general presentation of research vary across

journals and time? How does your research fit into these journals? How would you alter the presentation of your research to maximize the likelihood of publication in the journals that you reviewed?

Week 6 – 3/2: Finding and Presenting Data

Reading:

1. Review available datasets. For example, review:
 1. Golder (<http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/mgolder>)
 2. Brancati (<http://www.cle.wustl.edu/>)
 3. Database on Political Institutions (<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/0,,contentMDK:20649465~pagePK:64214825~piPK:64214943~theSitePK:469382,00.html>)
2. Grofman et al. 2004. "Comparing and Contrasting the Uses of Two Graphical Tools for Displaying Patterns of Multiparty Competition." *Party Politics*. 10(3):273-299.
3. Moser and Scheiner. Forthcoming, 2008. "Strategic Voting in Established and New Democracies: Ticket Splitting in Mixed-Member Electoral Systems." *Electoral Studies*.

Questions: How could you use existing datasets to answer important questions in electoral studies? What are the shortcomings of these datasets? What are (in)effective ways to present election data? What are the pros/cons of the methods presented in the assigned readings?

Week 7 – 3/9: Individual Meetings – Discussing Research Plans

Each student will assign readings for the class meeting on 3/23 and will provide references by the end of the week.

Week 8 – 3/16: No Class – Spring Break

Week 9 – 3/23: Research Question/Puzzle and Plan of Attack

Students will present their research plan, with a clear statement of the puzzle, and a plan for manuscript development.

Weeks 10-12 – 3/30, 4/6, 4/13: Individual Meetings – Work on Research/Data Analysis

Week 13 – 4/20: Preliminary Analysis

Students will present their hypotheses and preliminary findings.

Week 14 – 4/27: Individual Meetings – Work on Literature Review, Composition Issues, and Presentation

Week 15 – 5/4: Presentations and Oral Peer Reviews

Week 16 – 5/12: Final Papers and Written Peer Reviews – Due by 1pm.