

**Voting and Political Participation (POL 308)**  
**University of Mississippi, Spring 2022**

Instructor: Conor M. Dowling, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science  
Email: cdowling@olemiss.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:00-3:30pm in Deupree 235 or over Zoom  
Or by appointment (email to set a meeting day/time)

Class Time: T/Th from 2:30-3:45pm  
Class Location: Lamar Room 126  
Course Website: blackboard.olemiss.edu

---

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of the major research on political behavior. In particular, this course will focus on developing an understanding of the mechanisms that drive political participation (especially voting), particularly during campaigns and elections.

We will start the course by examining the factors that influence the decision to participate. How come some people vote and others do not? What makes some members of the public spend time on political protests or working in political campaigns? Once we have examined *who* participates, we will turn to the act of voting as a specific form of participation. Who votes? How are they different from those who do not vote? What makes one person vote Democratic while another votes Republican or even votes for Democrats *and* Republicans? Within political science, the area of political behavior has been the focus of much research. Our goal this semester will be to develop an understanding of this research through intensive reading (including readings that focus on *research* coming out of the most recent 2020 U.S. presidential election and 2018 U.S. congressional midterm elections and *prognostications* about the upcoming 2022 congressional midterm elections), quality discussion, and writing assignments.

In addition to this more substantive focus of the course, there is also a practical component that those interested in getting involved in campaigns and elections should find particularly interesting.

As is the case in any course, a great deal of topics germane to the course will not be covered. The interested student is encouraged to consult the instructor for additional readings on these subjects.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completing the course, students should:

- Have a deeper knowledge of the (theoretical and empirical) reasons why people vote and participate in other political activities.
- Have a deeper knowledge of the (theoretical and empirical) reasons why people vote for the candidates/parties they do.
- Be able to apply the class concepts, readings, discussion, etc. to contemporary political debates.
- Be better equipped to analyze contemporary research in political science and other social sciences, as well as news reports.
- Hopefully, be more inclined to participate in elections and governance.

## RECOMMENDED TEXTS

1. Flanigan, William H., Nancy H. Zingale, Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse, and Michael W. Wagner. 2018. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. 14<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
2. Green, Donald P., and Alan S. Gerber. 2019. *Get Out The Vote: How To Increase Voter Turnout*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

## Other Readings

Readings will be posted on blackboard.

Students are responsible for all assigned readings. I will not cover everything we read in lecture, and not everything covered in lecture will come from the readings. All reading and lecture material are fair game for the exams.

Also, please attempt to keep up with current events by reading or watching the news. By staying current on the news, especially the 2022 congressional elections, the class material we discuss will hopefully be easier to follow and more enjoyable to talk about.

## SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT THE SPRING 2022 SEMESTER (with information from the University)

**\*First, a note from me:** Please be conscientious of your classmates and me. If you are feeling sick, it's best to stay out of class that day – we're in a small room and it's going to be cold outside for the first part of the semester (at least), so we won't be opening windows or going outside much. When you're in class, I expect everyone to be wearing a mask that covers their mouth and nose (see additional guidance from the University / CDC below).

## Masks Required

- Wearing masks indoors will continue to be required, and compliance will be essential as we combat the latest surge in cases.
- [CDC guidance](#) says choose masks that:
  - have two or more layers,
  - cover your nose and mouth,
  - fit snugly,
  - don't have gaps, and
  - have a nose wire.
- Research indicates that the better the mask, the better the protection. The best masks available for public use are the KN95 and KF94 masks.

## Vaccinations

- We are still encouraging all faculty, staff, and students to get vaccinated and boosted [if eligible](#). Vaccination is proven to help lessen the severity of the symptoms of COVID-19 and to keep more people out of the hospital. And, initial data suggest COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters help to bolster protection against Omicron.
- The pharmacy at the [Student Health Center](#) (662-915-5279) offers FREE vaccines on a walk-up basis, no appointment necessary. The pharmacy is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., except Thursdays when it closes at 4 p.m. Find out more about on-campus and off-campus [vaccinations](#).

## If you have been exposed to COVID-19

- The CDC updated the recommended quarantine period for anyone who's been exposed to COVID-19. See complete details of the [updated CDC guidance](#) and information from [MSDH: What to Do If You Are Diagnosed with or Exposed to COVID-19 \(Isolation and Quarantine\)](#).
- Note that the recommendations for quarantine are the same for people who are up-to-date with their vaccines and people who have tested positive (on a viral or PCR test) in the last 90 days.
- Students are being advised to notify their instructors if they need to quarantine or isolate because they are symptomatic and/or have tested positive for COVID-19. ([You can see the letter sent to student by Vice Chancellor Pegues here.](#))
- Both symptomatic and asymptomatic people can get tested at the available testing sites. CDC recommends testing five days after exposure if you are asymptomatic, or as soon as you become symptomatic. See details below for specifics on how to get tested.

## Testing is Available

- Testing and subsequent isolation if positive is an important way to limit spread of the virus.
- Get free symptomatic or asymptomatic [COVID-19 testing at the University-Oxford Depot](#) on campus Monday through Saturday. To schedule your test, text "2020" to 833-991-3009 OR click on this [link](#).
- Call Student Health at 662-915-7274 if you need to schedule a symptomatic or asymptomatic test on campus.
- Local clinics offering COVID-19 tests are listed [here](#), and all Mississippians can be tested for free at MSDH testing sites. Lafayette County's MSDH testing site is at the [Oxford Conference Center](#) at 102 Ed Perry Blvd.

## GRADING POLICY

**\* Please note: Departmental policy is that no grades below a C can count towards a major in POL. This means a grade of C- does not count toward the POL major.**

### Final Grades

Your final grade is based on four primary areas of evaluation, which are detailed below.

- Class participation: 5%
- Quizzes (8 @ 2.5% each): 20%
- Papers (2 @ 10% each): 20%
- Examinations (midterm @ 25% and cumulative final @ 30%): 55%

A:	93-100	C+:	77-79
A-:	90-92	C:	73-76
B+:	87-89	C-:	70-72
B:	83-86	D:	60-69
B-:	80-82	F:	59 or below

### Class Participation (5% of overall grade)

Attendance will be noted in class from time to time either through roll call, short in-class assignments, or quizzes. Attendance will not be verified every class meeting, and is not mandatory; nor is there a penalty for not attending class. However, while in class, students will be expected to contribute to discussion when applicable. Therefore, please note that merely attending class is not sufficient for earning class participation points; you must participate in class discussion and activities as well.

Finally, class discussions are an important ingredient to any political science class from which both students and teachers can learn. I ask that you respect the diverse views of your fellow students and utilize common courtesies during class. While in class, refrain from talking while others are talking, eating, using the phone, etc... I will ask you to leave the class if you engage in behavior disrespectful to your fellow students or me. If you feel the need to engage in these activities (for example, if there is an emergency), please leave class.

\*Note: The University requires me to verify your attendance at least once during the first two weeks of the semester for financial aid and other administrative purposes. Students whose attendance is not verified after a certain period will automatically be dropped from the class and any financial aid will be adjusted accordingly. Please see <http://olemiss.edu/gotoclass> for more information.

**Quizzes (8 @ 2.5% each, or 20% of overall grade)**

To encourage reading the assigned material, we will have in class (or online, depending on what works best) quizzes from time-to-time. Eight quizzes will count toward your final grade. I will drop your lowest quiz grade(s), should we have more than eight, so that only eight quiz grades count toward your final average. Quiz dates are not predetermined.

**Examinations (midterm @ 25% and cumulative final @ 30%, or 55% of overall grade)**

Tests will cover material from lectures, course readings, and any assigned supplemental readings. Students cannot keep copies of the exams on exam day. There are two exams scheduled for March 8 and May 3. (Note: The exam scheduled for May 3 will not change. It is during our final exam time, which is Tuesday, May 3 from 4:00-7:00pm.)

***Make-up Work***

If you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time, you must talk with me *in advance of the exam* to receive any consideration for taking the exam with full credit. If you miss an exam and have not cleared it with me beforehand, any late exams will be deducted points. Make-up exams can only happen when you obtain a University approved excuse. In lieu of a University-approved excuse, any student missing an exam will receive a zero on that exam.

**Papers (2 @ 10% each, or 20% of overall grade)**

There will be two paper assignments, each approximately 3 pages in length. Papers are to be typed, double-spaced in 12 point, Times New Roman font. Papers must be handed in at the BEGINNING of class on the due date—one letter grade will be deducted for papers not received at the beginning of class, with an additional grade deducted for every day the paper is late—late papers will not be accepted more than three days after the due date. Plagiarizing will automatically result in a failed paper.

These paper assignments aim to develop and tap student creativity and ability at applying the material discussed in class to real world situations. These assignments are not formal research papers; they do not require research sources or bibliographies. However, they can be supplemented with outside sources, such as other books, journal articles, or newspapers. Any sources you do use MUST be appropriately cited.

This is the formula for calculating your final average:

Grade Component	Grade	Weight	Weighted Grade
Participation		x .05 =	
Quiz 1		x .025 =	
Quiz 2		x .025 =	
Quiz 3		x .025 =	

Quiz 4		x .025 =	
Quiz 5		x .025 =	
Quiz 6		x .025 =	
Quiz 7		x .025 =	
Quiz 8		x .025 =	
Paper 1		x .10 =	
Paper 2		x .10 =	
Midterm Exam		x .25 =	
Final Exam		x .30 =	
Sum	--	--	

If you think an error has occurred in the calculation of your grade, it is your responsibility to provide me copies of your work. To that end, it is prudent to save anything returned from me until you receive your final grade report.

## **OTHER COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Academic Honesty**

I do not tolerate cheating or plagiarizing in any form. Anyone caught cheating will, at the very least, fail that assignment and possibly the class. You may also face university disciplinary action. Please see the university handbook for more information on what constitutes academic misconduct and the official university procedure for dealing with such misconduct. For more information, please see the university's Student Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy.

### **Reading**

Make sure you have read before class. This is a crucial component to understanding the material in this course. This means you need to read the assigned material for each class meeting *before* that class meeting. The class will be more interesting for all involved and your grades will improve.

### **Communication**

It is the student's responsibility to check his/her university email address, preferably daily, since Blackboard works through university email addresses and this is how I will communicate with you. If you prefer another email address, set up forwarding from your university address.

The best way to contact me is to stop by my office during office hours, schedule an appointment, or by email.

#### ***A note about email communications***

Do not hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns you may have. However, please be professional in your emails. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source, such as the syllabus or other class documents. In addition, in many cases, I may request you meet with me to discuss your question rather than engage in a series of back and forth emails.

### **Getting Help**

If you do not understand something that we are discussing in class please let me know as you are almost certainly not alone. However, if no one asks for clarification there is no way for me to know when something needs to be clarified or reviewed. Some of the material we cover in each class will build on the material from the previous classes so if you don't understand something from one class you might not understand the material for the next class.

In summary: Do NOT wait until you have been lost for several classes to ask for help!

While I may not respond to emails immediately, during the week I will respond within 24 hours.

### **Miscellaneous, but Still IMPORTANT Information**

- Changes to the syllabus may be made from time to time in order to correct errors, adjust the schedule, fine tune course details, or to address unforeseen issues. Changes will be discussed and announced in class. It is the student's responsibility to attend class to be aware of any syllabus changes. The official syllabus will always be available on Blackboard.
  
- *Students and Basic Needs:* Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support: Brent Marsh, PhD, Assistant Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students, 233 Lyceum, [bmarsh@olemiss.edu](mailto:bmarsh@olemiss.edu), 662-915-7705. Students who are struggling to meet their basic needs may also find the following website helpful: <http://www.findhelpplafayettecounty.org/> Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.
  
- *For non-urgent mental health concerns:*
  - On the Oxford campus
    - The University Counseling Center provides free therapy to all students, faculty, and staff, 662-915-3784
    - The Psychological Services Center provides therapy to University and community members on a sliding scale fee, 662-915-7385
  - Elsewhere
    - The National Alliance on Mental Illness provides help finding support
    - The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies provides a Help section where you can find a CBT therapist and/or recommended self-help books
  
- *For urgent mental health concerns:*
  - On the Oxford campus
    - People can call campus police at any time and say they need to speak to a counselor immediately. A counselor will call back. (662-915-7234)
  - Nationally
    - People can call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or use their online chat system
    - The Trevor Project provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ individuals
  
- *Disability Access and Inclusion:* The University of Mississippi is committed to the creation of inclusive learning environments for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your full inclusion and participation or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please contact me as soon as possible. Barriers may include, but are not necessarily limited to, timed exams and in-class assignments, difficulty with the acquisition of lecture content, inaccessible web content or the use of non-captioned or non-transcribed video and audio files. If you are approved through SDS, you must log in to your Rebel Access portal at <https://sds.olemiss.edu> to request approved accommodations. If you are NOT approved through SDS, you must contact Student Disability Services at 662-915-7128 so the office can: 1. determine your eligibility for accommodations, 2. disseminate to your instructors a Faculty

Notification Letter, 3. facilitate the removal of barriers, and 4. ensure you have equal access to the same opportunities for success that are available to all students.

- *Title IX Policies / Non-Discrimination Based on Sex and Gender Presentation:* In accordance with University policy and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, each student has an equal right to receive an education and participate in University activities in an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sex or gender presentation. (This includes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and discrimination based on gender nonconforming, gender queer, and transgender identities.)
  - Any student who feels that their ability to learn and/or participate in fully in University activities because of their gender or a sex-related crime committed against them may file a report with Title IX Coordinator, Honey Ussery, and/or the University Police Department, seek private advocacy services or guidance from the Violence Intervention and Prevention Services, or seek confidential counseling services from the University of Mississippi Counseling Center.
    - Title IX Coordinator – Honey Ussery, 662-915-7045, [hbussery@olemiss.edu](mailto:hbussery@olemiss.edu)
    - Violence Intervention and Prevention Services – Shelli Poole (Confidential Advocate), 662-915-1059, [sapoole@olemiss.edu](mailto:sapoole@olemiss.edu)
    - University Counseling Center –Lester Hall – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 662-915-3784, [counslg@olemiss.edu](mailto:counslg@olemiss.edu). Services are free of charge.
    - University Police Department - Kinard Hall 662-915-4911 (emergency), 662-915-7234 (nonemergency), [upd@olemiss.edu](mailto:upd@olemiss.edu) (Is not monitored all the time — Do not use for emergencies!)
    - UMSAFE (<http://umsafe.olemiss.edu/>) is another potential resource.
  - If you see someone losing self-control through drug or alcohol use, help prevent them from becoming vulnerable to sexual assault! Do something to change the situation and help them be safe until they can recover self-awareness!
    - Bystander intervention tips and strategies: [https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/publications\\_nsvrc\\_tip-sheet\\_bystander-intervention-tips-and-strategies\\_1.pdf](https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/publications_nsvrc_tip-sheet_bystander-intervention-tips-and-strategies_1.pdf)
  - If you report a case of sexual assault or give evidence in a sexual assault case in a situation where underage students were drinking, you will not get in trouble with the University (i.e., you will not get a “strike”).
  - Students who have been sexually assaulted may seek immediate help by calling UPD or Violence Intervention and Prevention Services at any time. Students are encouraged to visit the University Health Center or Baptist Memorial Hospital for medical attention and/or evidence collection. Students may request a forensic examination up to 96 hours (4 days) after an assault, but evidence can best be collected immediately after an assault, before showering, eating, drinking, or changing clothes. If requested, evidence collection is free and confidential at both the University Health Center and Baptist Memorial Hospital. Going to the University Health Center or Baptist Memorial Hospital for medical attention does NOT require you to speak to law enforcement. Also, emergency contraception / morning-after pill can be obtained from a variety of sources.
  - Note: As a Title IX “mandated reporter,” I am required to inform Honey Ussery (see above) if you mention to me or around me that you or another student were ever sexually harassed, stalked, assaulted, or discriminated against.
    - However, no action can be taken by Honey or other administrators without your consent unless the situation presents a larger threat to the entire campus.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Day	Date	Topic	Reading
Tuesday	January 18	Course Overview and Introduction	
Thursday	January 20	Big Picture	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	January 25	Research Methods: Surveys and Experiments	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	January 27	Research Methods: Surveys and Experiments, continued	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	February 1	Political Culture and American Democracy	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	February 3	Civic Engagement / Social Capital	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	February 8	Political Participation (Turnout)	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	February 10	Voter Mobilization	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	February 15	Voter Mobilization, continued	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	February 17	Voter Mobilization, continued <i>* Paper #1 Due *</i>	No readings
Tuesday	February 22	Electoral Context and Strategy	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	February 24	Partisanship	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	March 1	Partisanship, continued	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	March 3	Spillover/review	No readings
Tuesday	March 8	<b><i>Midterm Exam</i></b>	
Thursday	March 10	Midterm Exam Recap	No readings
Tuesday	March 22	Issues and Ideology	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	March 24	Vote Choice	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	March 29	Vote Choice, continued	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	March 31	Do Campaigns Persuade Voters?	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	April 5	Money and Elections	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	April 7	Money and Elections, continued	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	April 12	The Media and Political Behavior	All readings posted on Blackboard
Thursday	April 14	The Media and Political Behavior, continued	All readings posted on Blackboard
Tuesday	April 19	<i>* Paper #2 Due *</i>	No readings
Thursday	April 21	No Class Meeting – State Politics & Policy Conference	
Tuesday	April 26	TBD	TBD
Thursday	April 28	TBD	TBD
Tuesday	May 3	<b><i>Final Exam Period, 4:00-7:00pm</i></b>	

### Other Important Dates:

January 31<sup>st</sup> – deadline for course withdrawals (with refund)

February 28<sup>th</sup> – deadline for course withdrawals (without refund)