

The Changing American Electorate, 1960-2000
PLSC 278

Syllabus 1.4
[March 4, 2008]

Spring, 2008
Place: B012, 77 Prospect Street
Time: Wednesdays, 2:30 - 4:20 PM
Office Hours: To Be Announced

Instructor:
Daniel Hopkins, Ph.D.
Center for the Study of American Politics
Yale University

www.danhopkins.org

On-Campus Mailbox: to the right as you enter 77 Prospect Street
Office: Room D133A, 87 Trumbull Street (enter through 77 Prospect St.)

In 1960, a Democratic candidate won a very narrow Presidential victory with just 100,000 votes; in 2000, the Democratic candidate lost but received 500,000 more votes than his opponent. Still, contemporary scholars and journalists have made a variety of arguments about just how much the American political landscape changed in the intervening 40 years, often calling recent decades a “transformation.”

This course explores and critically evaluates those arguments. Key questions include: how, if at all, have Americans’ political attitudes changed? How have their connections to politics changed? What has this meant for the fortunes and strategies of the two parties? How have the parties’ base voters and swing voters changed? What changes in American society have advantaged some political messages and parties at the expense of others? Focusing primarily on mass-level politics, we consider a wide range of potential causes, including the changing role of race in American politics, suburbanization, economic transformations, the evolving constellation of interest groups, declining social capital, the changing role of religion, immigration, and the actions of political elites. For three weeks in the semester, we will take a break from considering broader trends to look at specific elections in some depth.

To answer those questions, we will draw on a broad range of tools. We will read speeches from select elections to understand what issues were most central. We will also analyze election returns and polling data to understand the changes in American political geography. And we will turn to current academic articles and books, learning important statistical and historical tools along the way. Consistently throughout the course, we will ask a critical question: which methods are most appropriate for which research questions?

Background: Students must have taken at least one course in political science. Some knowledge of post-war American politics will be helpful. Knowledge of statistics or political history is *not* required, but a willingness to learn the basic tools is. Before any article requiring statistical background, we will briefly review the necessary tools to interpret the key findings.

Requirements: Please note that this class cannot be taken pass/fail (or “credit-no credit”).

Two students per week will take responsibility for presenting the readings and providing an overview of key issues to the class. The instructor will also ask for brief emails related to the week’s topic prior to several class meetings. These assignments, along with class preparation and participation, will account for 25% of the term grade.

During the seventh week, students will turn in the first written assignment, which will be 5-7 pages, and will present an interview of a friend or family member who is at least 50 years old to probe how, if at all, that person’s political views have changed over the period in question (20% of term grade).

On the final day of reading period, all students will turn in an 18-20 page research paper, which will focus on a specific trend, election, jurisdiction, issue, or other theme in the course (40% of term grade). I will propose several viable topics, but topics proposed by students are fine after consultation with me. Students will submit a 2-3 page research design and outline in the ninth week of the term (10% of term grade).

Time-permitting, students will present their research to the class and solicit feedback in the final weeks of the term.

OBTAINING THE READINGS

Readings are available in three formats. The first is through RIS, which has produced a coursepack. Readings included in the coursepack are noted as such. The second is a set of books available for purchase at Labyrinth Books, denoted with the word “purchase.” The third are available on the web and/or will be handed out, and are denoted with a “web.” The full list of books to purchase or secure through the Yale Libraries is:

Samuel Popkin. 1992. *The Reasoning Voter*
Carmines and Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution*
Robert D. Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone*
McGirr, Lisa. 2001. *Suburban Warriors*
Bruce Keith et al. 1992. *The Myth of the Independent Voter*
John Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*
Fiorina et al. 2006. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

1. Introduction: Trends in American Presidential Politics (Wednesday, January 16th)
Suggested readings:

Glaeser, Edward. 2006. "Myths and Realities in American Political Geography," available online at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w11857> (web)
Micklethwait and Wooldridge. 2004. *The Right Nation*, 5-26, 40-62 (coursepack, on reserve)

By 5 PM on Friday, January 18th, those students who are not pre-registered but wish to take the class should email me indicating: their major and year; why they wish to take the class; other relevant courses they have taken; other relevant non-academic experiences they have; whether they will be writing a senior essay; and any other pertinent information.

2. Methods and Models I: Theories and the Example of Popkin (Wednesday, January 23rd)

Charles Lave and James March. 1975. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*, pages 1-84 (coursepack)
Samuel Popkin. 1992. *The Reasoning Voter*, Chapters 1-4 (purchase)

Friday, January 25th: Senior Essay writers in Political Science must submit their signed prospectus to the Department

3. Race and Southern Realignment (Wednesday, January 30th)

Carmines and Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution*, Chapters 1-2, 4-6 (purchase)
Thomas Edsall. 1991. *Chain Reaction*, Chapters 1, 6 (coursepack)
Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds*, 140-163 (coursepack)

4. Methods and Models II: Survey Research (Wednesday, February 6th)

Today's seminar will begin with a discussion of the first paper assignment

Cantril, Albert. 1991. *The Opinion Connection: Polling, Politics and the Press*, Chapter 3 (coursepack)
Peverill Squire. 1988. "Why the 1936 *Literary Digest* Poll Failed," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (coursepack)
Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public*, Chapters 3-4 (coursepack)
Sample survey questions to be circulated and discussed

5. The Election of 1968 (Wednesday, February 13th)

E.J. Dionne. 1991. "Freedom Now: The New Left and the Assault on Liberalism," in *Why Americans Hate Politics* (coursepack)
Kevin Phillips. 1969. *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 25-42, 184-186, 286-298, 407-411 (coursepack)
Michael Kazin. 1995. *The Populist Persuasion*, Chapter 9, "Stand Up for the Working Man: George Wallace and the Making of a New Right" (coursepack)
Vote Returns by State (to be handed out)
Richard Nixon, Address to the 1968 Republican National Convention (to be handed out)
Hubert Humphrey, Address to the 1968 Democratic National Convention (to be handed out)
George Wallace, Select Address (to be handed out)

6. The Changing Civic Society (Wednesday, February 20th)

Robert D. Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone*, Chapters 2-3, 7-8 (purchase)

Theda Skocpol. 1999. "Advocates without Members," *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (coursepack)

John Aldrich. 1995. "The Critical Era of the 1960s," in *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (coursepack)

7. The Rise of the Suburbs (Wednesday, February 27th)

McGirr, Lisa. 2001. *Suburban Warriors*, Chapters 1-2, 5-6 (purchase)

Friday, February 29th: First paper assignment (5-7 pages) due in my mailbox, 77 Prospect Street, by 4 PM

8. The Role of Elite Messages (Wednesday, March 5th)

John Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Chapters 2-3, 6 (purchase)

John B. Judis. 2000. *The Paradox of American Democracy*, Chapters 1, 7 (coursepack)

John Gerring. 1996. *Party Ideologies in America*, 232-256 (coursepack)

9. The Election of 1980 (Wednesday, March 26th)

E.J. Dionne. 1991. "The Lost Opportunity: Jimmy Carter and the Not-So-Vital Center," in *Why Americans Hate Politics* (coursepack)

Michael Kazin. 1995. "Conservative Capture: From Nixon to Reagan," in *The Populist Persuasion* (coursepack)

Meffert, Michael F., Helmut Norpoth, and Anirudh Ruhil. 2002. "Realignment and Macropartisanship," *American Political Science Review* (coursepack)

Ronald Reagan, 1980 Address to the Republican National Convention (handout)

Jimmy Carter, 1980 Address to the Democratic National Convention (handout)

10. Religion and the Right (Wednesday, April 2nd)

Matthew Moen. 2001. *The Transformation of the Christian Right*, Chapters 1, 4-6 (coursepack)

Robert Wuthnow. 1999. "Mobilizing Civic Engagement: The Changing Impact of Religious Involvement" in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (coursepack)

Robert D. Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone*, Chapter 4 (purchase)

Greg D. Adam, 1997, "Abortion: Evidence of an Issue Evolution," *American Journal of Political Science* (coursepack)

Friday, April 4th: 3 page research proposals/outlines due by 4 PM to my mailbox, 77 Prospect Street

11. Dealignment, Independents, and Distrust (Wednesday, April 9th)

Select students will make brief presentations about their research

Mark Hetherington. 2005. *Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism*, Chapters 1, 3, and 5 (coursepack)

Bruce Keith et al. 1992. *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, 1-25, 60-111, 134-168 (purchase)

Carmines et al. 1987. "Unrealized Partisanship: A Theory of Dealignment", *Journal of Politics* (coursepack)

12. Clinton and the Elections of 1992 and 1994 (Wednesday, April 16th)

Select students will make brief presentations about their research

Stanley Greenberg, *Middle Class Dreams*, Chapters 7-8 (coursepack)

Burden and Lacy, "The Vote-Stealing and Turnout Effects of Ross Perot" (coursepack)

Samuel Popkin. 1992. *The Reasoning Voter*, Chapter 11 (purchase)

George H. W. Bush, Address to the Republican National Convention, 1992 (handout)

William Jefferson Clinton, Address to the Democratic National Convention, 1992 (handout)

Select Address by Ross Perot (handout)

13. Polarization (Wednesday, April 23rd)

Select students will make brief presentations about their research

Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders. 1998. "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," *Journal of Politics* (coursepack)

Morris Fiorina, Samuel Abrams, and Jeremy Pope. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (purchase)

Larry M. Bartels. 2000. "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996", *American Journal of Political Science* (coursepack)

Senior Essays Due: Friday, April 28th, 2008 at 4 PM to my 77 Prospect Street Mailbox

Final Paper Due: Monday, May 5th, 2008 at 4 PM to my 77 Prospect Street Mailbox. Please note that the mailboxes are not publicly accessible after 4:30 PM.

OTHER SOURCES

To learn more about some of the topics above, or in thinking about term papers, the works below could be useful, and are provided as references:

General

Fraser and Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*

Samuel Freedman, *The Inheritance: How Three Families and the American Political Majority Moved from Left to Right*

Third Parties

Ronald Rapoport and Walter Stone. *Three's a Crowd*

Immigration

Ramakrishnan, *Democracy in Immigrant America*

Louis DeSipio, *Counting on the Latino Vote*

Labor

Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*

David J. Sousa. 1993. "Organized Labor in the Electorate, 1960-1988," *Political Research Quarterly* 46:4

Gender

Mansbridge, Jane. 1986. *Why We Lost the ERA*

Miroff, Bruce. 2007. "Movement Activists and Partisan Insurgents." *Studies in American Political Development* 92-109.

Religion

Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America*

Timothy Byrnes, *Catholic Bishops in American Politics*

Hugh Heclo, *Religion Returns to the Public Square*

Race

Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*

Jonathan Reider, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism*

Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*

Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*

Place and Politics

Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*

Biography

Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*

Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm*

Nina J. Easton, *Gang of Five: Leaders at the Center of the Conservative Ascendancy*