Tentative Syllabus
POLS 513: Political Behavior

Washington State University, Spring 2007
Thursday, 2:10 – 5 p.m., Room CUE 207

Instructor: Dr. Travis Ridout
Email: tnridout@wsu.edu
Phone: 509-335-2264
Office Hours:
816 Johnson Tower
Course webpage: www.wsu.edu/~tnridout/ps513.htm

Introduction

This course offers an overview of the field of mass political behavior. In other words, our focus will be on the individual and his or her relationship with the political system. Accordingly, much of what we study will be about what happens inside citizens’ minds. Yet our approach will not be purely psychological as we will also explore how the institutions and rules of the system affect people’s political thinking and behavior. In sum, we will be careful not to remove the politics from political behavior and political science.

Readings

There are five books available for purchase:


Grading

Your final grade in this course will depend on your success in four areas:
1. Four response papers (20%). You will write 6 response papers for this course, each in the range of 3-4 double-spaced pages in length. Each paper should express your reaction to the readings for the week. These papers should NOT simply be a summary of the readings. Instead, you might raise questions provoked by the readings, compare the arguments of different authors, critique the authors’ methodology, or propose alternative explanations for the authors’ findings. These papers are due to me by 9 a.m. the day of class. You may submit them to me at my office or send them to me via email.

2. Research paper proposal (15%). This assignment is essentially the initial step in writing your research paper for this course. This proposal should 1) raise the research question you want to study, 2) present a review of relevant literature, 3) present your theory and hypotheses derived therefrom, and 4) describe how you will answer your question. Ten to twelve pages is a good length for this assignment. DUE FEBRUARY 25, 5 p.m.

3. Research paper (25%). Here you will write a full-blown research paper of the type that might be presented at an academic conference. Indeed, I will encourage you to submit your papers for presentation at a political science conference (or the conference of an associated discipline). This paper should include all of the elements of the research proposal, but instead of merely describing how you will answer your question, you will answer it in the final section through the use of statistical analysis, game theory, experiments, survey research, the comparative method, non-participant observation, or any other rigorous empirical methodology. DUE APRIL 29, 5 p.m.

4. A final exam (20%). This take-home final exam will consist of four questions similar to the type that would appear on a preliminary exam. You will choose to answer two of the four in no more than 4 pages each (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point Times font). Your exams will be due in my office by the end of the time period during which our final exam is scheduled.

5. Class participation and attendance (20%). Class participation and attendance are required. Notify me beforehand if you will be absent from class. I also expect that everyone will make contributions to our class discussions.

Other information

If there are things I talk about in class that you do not understand, do not hesitate to talk to me about them. I am here to help you learn the course material. And if there are other matters that you think should be brought to my attention, let me know.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS. Assignments must be at my office by 5 p.m. on the due date or they will be considered late. For each day an assignment is late, I will subtract 10 percent of the assignment’s total point value from your score.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT. I do not tolerate plagiarizing or cheating of any kind. Such behavior will result in failing the course and other disciplinary action. Please see the Student
Handbook at the Division of Student Affairs website at www.studentaffairs.wsu.edu for a full description of the types of academic misconduct. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see me immediately.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION. Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center, which is located in the Administration Annex room 205 or call 335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability counselor.

**Course Outline**

1. **Political Socialization**


2. **Origins of Mass Opinion**


3. **Structure of Mass Opinion I**


4. Structure of Mass Opinion II


5. Political Psychology: Emotions


6. Political Psychology: Attitude Change


Mutz, Diana, Paul M. Sniderman and Richard A. Brody. 1996. Political Persuasion and Attitude Change. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11

7. Political Communication: Interpersonal Communication and Deliberation


8. Political Communication: Media Effects


9. Political Communication: Political Advertising I


10. Political Communication: Political Advertising II


11. Partisanship


12. Voting Behavior


**13. Political Participation**


**14. Prejudice and Tolerance**


