

## **Sociology of Politics**

SOCI 133

Spring 2018 Syllabus, Updated 1/8/2018

**Instructor:** Akram Al-Turk

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**Time and Location:** TuTh 2:00-3:15pm, Phillips 332

**Office Hours:** Th 3:15-4:00pm, Hamilton 218 (or by appointment)

### **Course Overview and Learning Objectives**

Why do individuals participate in politics (e.g., vote) or become engaged in their communities (e.g., join a voluntary association, protest, etc.)? What role do social networks play in political and civic engagement? What accounts for the increasing political partisanship in the United States? And how do the shifts in political participation, civic engagement, and partisanship all have an effect on, or are shaped by, policymaking? We will explore these questions in this course.

I have three broad goals for this course, and I have tried to structure the course, including assignments, in a way that will allow each of you to achieve these goals. These goals are a reflection of two things. The first is based on what I find exciting *and* challenging about “doing” social science. In short, we observe the social world (through everyday experiences, data, historical cases, etc.), and we often have multiple ideas (theories) about how or why we observe these phenomena. The challenge, then, is figuring out how these multiple explanations complement or contradict each other and making a judgment about their strengths and weaknesses. The second is that, in a world where we’re inundated with information, most of which is increasingly at everyone’s fingertips, being able to *effectively* make an argument is an important skill to have. The three goals are to:

1. Understand the different possible explanations to the questions above.
2. Find, collect, and analyze empirical evidence to help you assess the strength of the explanations in the readings.
3. Write (and argue) effectively.

### **Requirements**

#### **Attendance and Lateness**

Doing well in this class requires consistent daily attendance. If you have to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time. Also, if a family emergency comes up, please let me know.

I will not take attendance, but note that we will have between 15 and 20 in-class assignments. Each of these assignments will count for approximately 1 percent of your overall grade (see Assignments section below).

We will start and end class on time, so please don't be late. If you have to leave a little early, please let me know in advance.

## Readings

Required texts (all available from UNC Student Stores):

- 1) Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
  - 2) Campbell, David. 2006. *Why We Vote: How Schools and Communities Shape Our Civic Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
  - 3) Bishop, Bill. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- All other material will be available on Sakai or through the UNC library (either as a course reserve or as an e-book).

Recommended texts (not available from UNC Student Stores):

- 1) Wickham, Hadley and Garrett Grolemund. 2017. *R for Data Science: Import, Tidy, Transform, Visualize, and Model Data*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly. Online edition of the book is available at <http://r4ds.had.co.nz/>.
- 2) Healy, Kieran. Forthcoming. *Data Visualization for Social Science: A practical introduction with R and ggplot2*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Online draft of book is available at <http://socviz.co/>.
- 3) Strunk, William and E. B. (Elwyn Brooks) White. 2009. *The Elements of Style*. 50th Anniversary ed. New York: Pearson Longman. Any edition will do. Copies are available through the UNC library.

This is a reading and writing intensive course. Please read all assigned material *before* coming to class. Our discussions and assignments in class will require you to have read and at least tried to process the readings. You are expected not just to do the readings but to think about them before class.

## Assignments

Your grade will be based on three short answer tests, two papers, in-class writing assignments, data collection and analysis, and a final exam.

- 1) Short Answer Tests (3) - 18%

- For each test, I will ask you to answer 4-6 questions related to the readings. These tests are take home, and I will post them 5-7 days before they're due. They'll be available under the Tests and Quizzes section in Sakai.
- 2) Papers (2) - 30%
    - I will ask you to write two short papers in this course that will require you to do some data analysis. You will use empirical evidence to test any of the theories from the readings that you find interesting. Each paper will be about 1,000-1,500 words.
  - 3) In-class writing - 20%
    - These are short in-class writing assignments that are mostly intended for you to reflect on the readings and our in-class discussions.
  - 4) Data collection - 8%
    - You will be asked to survey four people, and you will use the data we collect as a class in your analysis for paper #1.
  - 5) Data analysis - 12%
    - I will give you 4-6 questions and will ask you to answer those questions using R, the statistical programming language we're using in this class.
  - 6) Final Exam - 12%
    - Like the tests, the final exam will be all short answer.

### **Respect**

The readings in this course will, I hope, show you that there are many ways to interpret the topics we will discuss. Because of that, I hope that we will be able to have fruitful debates that will challenge all of us to compare different viewpoints. Please keep in mind that our goal should be to debate ideas, not each other as individuals.

### **Grading Scale**

Student performance will be graded on a 100-point scale. A grade of 93.33 and above will qualify for an A, 90 and above A-, 86.67 and above B+, 83.33 and above B, 80 and above B-, and so on. I do, however, reserve the right to maintain some flexibility in this scale.

### **Important Dates and Assignments:**

(Subject to change. Check Calendar tab in Sakai for latest. Percent of final grade in parentheses.)

- Wednesday, 1/31 - Test #1 due at 5:00 pm (6%)

- Wednesday, 2/21: Test #2 due at 5:00 pm (6%)
- Friday, 3/2: Data collection due at 5:00 pm (8%)
- Monday, 3/19: Paper #1 due at 5:00 pm (12%)
- Wednesday, 4/4: Test #3 due at 5:00 pm (6%)
- Wednesday, 4/11: Data analysis due at 5:00 pm (12%)
- Monday, 4/23: Paper #2 due at 5:00 pm (18%)
- Monday, 5/7: Final exam at 12:00 pm (12%)

### **Administrative Issues**

#### **Academic Honesty**

All assignments are subject to the university's Honor Code. Do not claim other people's work as your own and give credit for words and ideas that you quote or paraphrase. UNC-Chapel Hill has had a student-led honor system for over 100 years. The student-led Honor System is responsible for adjudicating any suspected violations of the Honor Code and all suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the honor system. Information, including your responsibilities as a student, is outlined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance.

#### **Student Accommodations**

UNC-Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. Please visit their website, call them at 919-962-8300, or email them. A student is welcome to initiate the registration process at any time. The process can, however, take time. ARS is particularly busy in the run-up to Finals and during Finals. Students submitting Self-ID forms at that time are unlikely to have accommodations set until the following semester. Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

#### **Electronic Device Policy**

Please turn off your cell phone and store it during class. If you need to take a call for some reason, put your phone on vibrate and step out quietly. Please also store your laptop during class. Research shows that using a laptop during class hinders your learning and the learning of students around you. There may be times when we'll need either your phone or laptop, but I will let you know in advance if that is the case.

If for any reason you feel you need to use a laptop to take notes, please talk with me after the first class.

### **Office Hours**

My office hours for this semester will be Thursdays right after class (3:15-4:00pm). To make the best use of our time, try to come prepared with specific questions. But please feel free to come to my office hours just to chat!

### **Email Policy**

I try to avoid checking emails after 6 pm and on weekends, and in that spirit, I will not email you (or reply to an email) during those times. My goal is to respond to all emails within one working day during the week or, if you email on Friday or the weekend, the following Monday. Please take this email policy into account when thinking about assignments. If you wait until the last minute and realize you have a question about an assignment, I may not get back to you in time.

### **Course Outline**

(Subject to change. Check Calendar tab in Sakai for latest.)

#### **Thursday, 1/11:** Introduction to the Course

- Overview of course
- Expectations
- Introductions
- Syllabus review

#### **Tuesday, 1/16:** Social Logic of Politics

- Zuckerman, Alan. 2007. "Returning to the Social Logic of Politics." In *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*, edited by Zuckerman, A. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. **Only pages 3-16** (Sakai)
- Putnam, Chapter 1

#### **Thursday, 1/18:** Political and Civic Participation Trends

- Putnam, Chapters 2 and 3

#### **Tuesday, 1/23:** Participation Explanations, Foundations

- Madison, James. 1787. *Federalist No. 10*. First half. Available at <https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers#TheFederalistPapers-10>.

- de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1840. *Democracy in America*. Volume II, Second Book, Chapter 4: “That The Americans Combat the Effects of Individualism by Free Institutions.” (Sakai)
- de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1840. *Democracy in America*. Volume II, Second Book, Chapter 8: “How the Americans Combat Individualism by the Principle of Self-Interest Rightly Understood.” (Sakai)

**Thursday, 1/25:** Participation Explanations, Part II

- Campbell, Chapters 1 and 2

**Tuesday, 1/30:** Informal Social Connections and Volunteering

- Putnam, Chapters 6 and 7

**Thursday, 2/1:** Networks and Trust

- Putnam, Chapter 8
- Campbell, Chapter 4

**Tuesday, 2/6:** Socialization

- Campbell, Chapter 5
- Mead, George Herbert. 1929. *Mind, Self, and Society*. Excerpts. (Sakai)

**Thursday, 2/8:** Institutions

- Campbell, Chapter 7

**Tuesday, 2/13:** Data Workshop #1

**Thursday, 2/15:** Time, Money, and Mobility

- Putnam, Chapters 10, 11, and 12

**Tuesday, 2/20:** Technology and Wrap-up

- Putnam, Chapters 13 and 15

**Thursday, 2/22:** Movements and the Internet

- Putnam, Chapter 9

**Tuesday, 2/27:** Data Workshop #2

**Thursday, 3/1:** Data Workshop #3

**Tuesday, 3/6:** Data Workshop #4

**Thursday, 3/8:** Wrap-up on First Half

**Spring Break: 3/12 - 3/16**

**Tuesday, 3/20:** Why Place Matters

- Bishop, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2

**Thursday, 3/22:** The Roots of Political Segregation

- Bishop, Chapters 4 and 5

**Tuesday, 3/27:** The Economics of Political Segregation

- Bishop, Chapter 6

**Thursday, 3/29:** How Religion and Lifestyle Matter

- Bishop, Chapters 7 and 9

**Tuesday, 4/3:** Racial Segregation and Voting

- Chapter 2 in Enos, Ryan. 2017. *The Space between Us: Social Geography and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Online through UNC library)

**Thursday, 4/5:** Data Workshop #5

**Tuesday, 4/10:** Data Workshop #6

**Thursday, 4/12:** The Rise of Interest Groups and Advocacy Organizations

- Berry, Jeffrey M. 1999. “The Rise of Citizen Groups.” Pp. 367–93 in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, edited by T. Skocpol and M. Fiorina. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. (Sakai)
- Skocpol, Theda. 1999. “Advocates without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life.” Pp. 461–509 in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, edited by T. Skocpol and M. Fiorina. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. (Sakai)
- Kennedy, Anthony. 2010. *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*, 558 U.S. 310. (Sakai)

**Tuesday, 4/17:** How Politics Shapes Policies

- Gilens, Martin and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.” *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3):564–581. (Sakai)
- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Christine Mahoney. 2005. “Social Movements, the Rise of New Issues, and the Public Agenda.” Pp. 65–86 in *Routing the opposition: social movements, public policy, and democracy*, edited by H. Ingram, V. Jenness, and D. S. Meyer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Sakai)

**Thursday, 4/19:** How Policies Shape Politics

- Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2007. “Universalism, Targeting, and Participation.” Pp. 121–40 in *Remaking America: democracy and public policy in an age of inequality*, edited by J. Soss, J. Hacker, and S. Mettler. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. (Sakai)

**Tuesday, 4/24:** Unequal Participation

- Walker, Edward T., Michael McQuarrie, and Caroline Lee. 2015. “Rising Participation and Declining Democracy.” in *Democratizing inequalities:*

*dilemmas of the new public participation*, edited by C. W. Lee, M. McQuarrie, and E. T. Walker. New York: New York University Press. (Online through UNC library)

- Walker, Edward T. 2015. “Legitimizing the Corporation through Public Participation.” in *Democratizing inequalities: dilemmas of the new public participation*, edited by C. W. Lee, M. McQuarrie, and E. T. Walker. New York: New York University Press. (Online through UNC library)

**Thursday, 4/26:** Wrap-up

- Readings TBD

**Monday, 5/7:** Final Exam at 12:00 pm

### **Acknowledgements**

I’ve drawn on the syllabi of Matthew Baggetta’s and Andy Perrin’s courses for help in constructing my own.