SPECIAL TOPICS: VOTING TRENDS IN NATIONAL AND STATE POLITICS

Course: RPOS 399 (9452)

Instructor: Bruce N. Gyory

Spring 2009: Monday and Wednesday 4:15-5:35

Place: Fine Arts Room 126

Schedule of Topics for Class Discussion and Related Assignments

**January 21**: Overview of Course (Requirements for exams, research paper, reading and attendance).

Preliminary Discussion: Did the 2008 Election Produce a Political Realignment? What is a realigning election? What do the 2008 election returns tell us about the potential for an enduring Obama coalition?

**Readings**: No assignment, but a handout essay will be distributed, supplementing discussion.

**January 26**: Discussion: Why do people vote the way they do? Theories of voting matched against exit polling and actual returns. Examination of V.O. Key’s, The Responsible Electorate, updated by Stanley Greenberg’s The Two Americas.

**Readings**: Suggested not required. Key and Greenberg books see above (out of print, hence library reading);
Required Zogby: The Way We’ll Be: The Zogby Report on the Transformation of the American Dream (Introduction and Chapters 1-3).

**January 28 and February 2**: Forming Party Coalitions: The Democrats. Analyzing the national coalition the Democrats are searching for and hoping to secure.

**Readings**: Required John B. Judis and Ray Teixeira
The Emerging Democratic Majority (Introduction and Chapters 2, 3, 4, Conclusion and Afterward) and Schaller: Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South (Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

**February 2 and 4**: Forming Party Coalitions: The Republicans. From Reagan to beyond.

**Readings**: Required: Ross Douthat & Reihan Salam: Grand New Party and Judis and Teixeira (Chapter 1 and 5).

**February 9**: Disintegration of Party Coalitions. The Rise of Independent Voting and the Prelude to Realignment.

**Readings**: Required – Catch up on reading assignments from January26 – February 2nd and Zogby (op. cit) Chapters 4-7)
Suggested – Joe Klein Politics Lost.
February 11: Theories of Realignment.
A. Topics for Term Papers
Suggestions and Discussion of topics to help students choose topic. Should have topic presented to me by March 2. In one page memo with topic and rationale.

Winter Break Week of February 16

February 23: Breaking down the electorate: Gender

February 25: Breaking down the electorate: Ethnic voting – The political experience of Irish, the Italian and the Jewish communities in America politics.
Readings: 7. Required: Michael Barone The New Americans (Chapters 1, 3 and 5)

Readings: Required: Barone (op. cit) Chapter 2 and Schaller Chapters 2 and 3, Suggested: peruse Jeremy D. Mayer: Running on Race: (out of print, library option).
A. Students submit paper topics in written memo.

March 4: Breaking down the electorate. Rise of Hispanic and Asian voting

March 9: Polling – Science or Art. An examination of the techniques, strengths and limitations of polling.

March 11: Review for Mid-term
A. Approval of Term Paper topics returned.

March 16: In class Mid-term: 1 short essay; one long essay.
A. Distribution of handouts for next reading assignment.

March 18: An introduction to analyzing political trends in swing states.
Readings: Required Judis and Teixeira (op. cit) Chapter 3 and handouts distributed on March 16.

March 23 and 25: NYS - A study in regionalism. Tracking political trend lines in New York State over last 3 decades.
**Readings:** Required from E Reserve: The Crouching Future of New York State Politics – What the 2002 General Election Returns Reveal, by Bruce N. Gyory

**March 30:** NYS break down the electorate in 2004  

**Spring Break Week of April 8-13**

**April 11:** Breakdown and update of NYS electorate in 2006.

**April 15:** NYS electorate in 2008 and beyond  
**Readings:** Required. Catch up from March 23-April 11th reading assignments.

**April 20, 22 and 27:** In class presentations on paper topics by students. Volunteers get an extra credit bump on paper grade, in return for making presentation.  
A. Research papers due April 22nd

**May 4:** Review for Final Exam.