

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Course: RPOS 399 (9667)

SPECIAL TOPICS: VOTING TRENDS IN NATIONAL AND STATE POLITICS

Spring 2011: Monday and Wednesday 4:15-5:35

Place: LC Room 02

Instructor: Bruce N. Gyory, bgory@corningplace.com

(518) 487-0844 (cell)

Instructor's Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 3:00 – 4:00

Humanities B-16

I. Course Description:

This course will study voting trends nationally and in state politics with a particular focus on NYS and certain swing states. The course will meld an exploration of well established political science postulates explaining voting behavior and trends, with a study of key data points underlying and explaining political demography including, but not limited to: population, registration, partisanship (as well as explaining the rise of independent voting) race, gender, ethnicity as well as regional patterns and polling. The focus will be on charting and predicting the potential for political realignment both nationally (and within different regions) and here in NYS.

II. Prerequisites: RPOS 101 Preferred

III. Grading Scheme: A-E

A. Midterm and final will count for 25 percent each and research paper will count for 50 percent of final grade. Midterm and final will be take home essay exams posing questions asking students to use reading materials and lectures to

functionally solve strategic puzzles of political demography. The research paper will be a synthesizing analysis of voting trends, at the national or state level.

Topic will be of student's choosing, but instructor approved. Research paper will be due toward end of the semester, but before finals.

- B. If mid term, if term paper is handed in late, the grades will be reduced by half a grade each day the exam or paper is late, but anything later than 4 days results in failing grade (only extraordinary extenuating circumstances will merit any exception and my approval is required with request for exception to be made by student to me made prior to due date). Final exams must be returned on time.
- C. Attendance policies: 2 absences excused, all additional absences require notice and approval or make up assignment will be required. Failure to provide compensatory make up assignments, could lower grade up to 10 percent.

IV. Course Readings:

- A. Required Reading: The only materials that must be read. Suggest purchasing 1 - 4.
 1. John Zogby: The Way We'll Be: The Zogby Report on the Transformation of the American Dream. Random House 2008.
 2. Ross Douthat & Reihan Salam: Grand New Party: How Republicans can win the Working Class and Save the American Dream. Doubleday 2008.
 3. John B. Judis and Ray Teixeira: The Emerging Democratic Majority. Scribner 2002.

4. Michael Barone: The New Americans: How The Melting Pot Can Work Again. Regenery 2001.
 5. Bruce N. Gyory Memorandums: copies will be handed out in class prior to assigned reading.
 - a. Policy Conversation – Rockefeller College, The Political Implications of the Great Recession – March 9, 2010.
 - b. The Crouching Future of New York State Politics – What the 2002 General Election Returns Reveal. December 13, 2002.
 - c. Did the 2008 Election Produce a Realignment? November 9, 2008.
 - d. Warren M. Anderson Breakfast Seminar – Albany Law School’s Institute of legal Studies. Same Sex Marriage – Analyzing the Trendlines in Public Opinion. March 23, 2010.
 - e. 2009 NYC Mayoral Race. The Polls Were Right, but the Pollsters Were Wrong. November, 2009.
 - f. Updating the Crouching Future of New York State Politics 2003-2010. April 23, 2010.
 - g. Regionalization Resurfaces in the Primaries, September 22, 2010.
 - h. Policy Conversation at Rockefeller College – Through the Political Looking Glass: A Look Back and a Peak Forward. November 30, 2010.
- B. Suggested Readings: Supplemental Library Reading, Purchase Only if Desired (or if key source for term paper).

1. Walter Dean Burnham: Critical elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics. W.W. Norton 1970.
2. Michael Traugott and Paul Lavrakas: The Voter's Guide to Election Polls. Fourth Edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2008.
3. Celinda Lake and Kellyanne Conway: What Women Really Want: How Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class and Religious Lines to Change the Way we Live. Free Press 2005.
4. Thomas F. Schaller: Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South. Simon & Schuster 2006.
5. Jorge Ramos: The Latino Wave: How Hispanics will Elect the Next American President. Rayo 2004
6. Joe Klein: Politics Lost: How American Democracy was Trivialized by People Who Think You're Stupid. Doubleday 2006.
7. Mark J. Penn: Microtrends: The Small forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes. Twelve 2007.

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Schedule of Topics for Class Discussion and Related Assignments

January 19: Overview of Course (Requirements for exams, research paper, reading and attendance).

Preliminary Discussion: Anatomy of 2010 Mid-term elections: US Senate, House and Gubernatorial elections.

Readings: No assignment, but a handout essay will be distributed, supplementing discussion. Policy Conversation – Through the Political Looking Glass: A Look Back and a Peak Forward, by Bruce N. Gyory.

January 24: 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? Or will the Republicans dealign the electorate in the wake of 2010 elections?

Readings: No assignment, but a handout essay will be distributed, supplementing discussion. Did the 2008 Election Produce a Realignment, by Bruce N. Gyory.

January 26: Discussion: The Political Implications of the Great Recession.

Readings: Policy Conversation – Rockefeller College: The Political Implications of the Great Recession by Bruce N. Gyory.

January 31: 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).

February 2 and 7: 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). Suggested: Schaller: Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South (Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

February 9 and 14: Forming Party Coalitions: The Republicans. From Reagan to beyond. Where are the Republicans heading?

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

February 16: Disintegration of Party Coalitions. The Rise of Independent Voting and the Prelude to Realignment or Dealignment?

Readings: Required – Catch up on reading assignments from February 2 – 14 and Zogby (op. cit) Chapters 4-7)
Suggested – Joe Klein Politics Lost.

Winter Break: No classes February 21 and 23

February 28: Theories of Realignment.

Readings: Suggested– Flip through Walter Dean Burnham: Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics and Samuel Lubell The Future of American Politics (both out of print, use library). Lecture will thoroughly cover material.

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.

March 2: Breaking down the electorate: Gender

Readings: 5. Suggested: Lake and Conway: What Women Really Want (Complete book)

A. Students submit paper topics in written memo form – 1 pager.

March 7: Breaking down the electorate: Ethnic voting – The political experience of Irish and Black communities.

Readings: 7. Required: Michael Barone The New Americans (Part 1: Chapters 1,2 and conclusion).

March 9: Review for Mid-term (Take Home Mid-Term) and an examination of same sex marriage as a wedge issue.

A. Approval of Term Paper topics returned.

B. Mid-term Essay Topic distributed!!!

C. Continuation of the political experience of the Black community.

Suggested: Peruse Jeremy D. Mayer: Running on Race (out of print, library reading).

March 14 and 16: Breaking down the electorate: Italian and Hispanic Communities.

Readings: Required: Barone (op. cit) Part 2: Chapter 3 and 4

Suggested: Jorge Ramos: The Latino Wave

A. March 14: Mid term exams due – handed in by end of class!!!

March 21: Breaking down the electorate. Rise of Jewish and Asian communities

Readings: Required: Barone (op. cit) Part 3, Chapters 5 and 6.

March 23: Finish up ethnic/racial communities; examination of the political implications of sexual orientation.

Readings: Same Sex Marriage – Analyzing the Trendlines in Public Opinion by Bruce N. Gyory.

March 28: Polling – Science or Art. An examination of the techniques, strengths and limitations of polling.

Readings: 4. Required: Traugott and Lavrakas: The Voter’s Guide to Election Polls (complete book).

March 30: An introduction to analyzing political trends in NYS, NYC and swing states.

Readings: Required Judis and Teixeira (op. cit) Chapter 3 and handout distributed on March 22nd re: 2009 Mayoral race in NYC: Why the Polls Were Right, but the Pollsters Wrong by Bruce N. Gyory

April 4 and 6: NYS - A study in regionalism. Tracking political trend lines in New York State over the last 3 decades.

Readings: Required: The Crouching Future of New York State Politics – What the 2002 General Election Returns Reveal, by Bruce N. Gyory

April 11: NYS break down the electorate in 2004 and 2008

Readings: Updating the Crouching Future of NYS Politics 2003-2010 by Bruce N. Gyory.

April 13: Breakdown and update of NYS electorate 2006 - 2010. Focus on the regional voting patterns within NYS.

A. Research Term Papers Due!!!

Spring Break Week of April 18 – April 25

April 27: NYS electorate in 2010 and beyond

Readings: Required. Catch up from April 4-April 19th reading assignments.

A. Final Exam Essay Question Distributed – April 27th.

Readings: Regionalism Resurfaces in 2010 Primaries by Bruce N. Gyory.

May 2: In class presentations on paper topics by students.

Volunteers can get an extra credit bump on paper grade, in return for making a cogent presentation. Final thoughts and wrap up.

Last Class. Final Exam Essay Due!!!! Handed in by end of class!!!!