Voting in the US: Access, Fairness, and Reform

Class Time: Monday 6:25-9:05
Classroom: Memorial 104

Professor: Dr. Christopher Mann
E-mail: cmann@miami.edu
Phone: (305) 284-8052 (e-mail is more reliable)
Office Location: Jenkins 314-L
Office Hours: MW 5-6, and by appointment.

Course Description:
Compared to other democracies, the way elections are run in the US can be downright embarrassing. Prior to the 2000 Presidential election, few people paid attention to the administration of American elections. The problems here in Florida in 2000 and numerous problems with election results since then across the country have demonstrated that the way American democracy is run is far from American ideals about how democracy should work.

This course is an exploration of how elections are run in the United States. Fair and free democratic elections require clear rules and careful execution. This course will examine the state and federal laws and regulations governing the conduct of elections, the way local election officials administer elections, and proposals for reforming voter registration and how voters cast ballots in local, state, and national elections in the United States.

The course is a seminar, so reading, preparation, and participation are vital to your success. Research in this area is relatively new, so we will be reading cutting edge research. Almost all of the readings were published in the last few years. We will encounter many areas where there is no research to answer important questions and many areas where the answers are unsatisfactory or inconclusive. We will discuss what is important to study next and how election administrators can meet the challenges of running elections with incomplete information.

At times, the material in this course may be a bit dry or technical. Thinking about the mechanisms inside voting machines, the accuracy of the Post Office, or how easy it is to complete a form is not exactly edge-of-your-seat drama. Therefore it is always important to keep the stakes of these sometimes dry topics in mind: Are the people in public office the true winners of the votes? Do voters believe that the process of voting works? Does the operation of American democracy live up to the ideal of American democracy?

Class Decorum: In addition to learning about campaigns and elections, you are preparing for ‘real life’ after graduation. As such, you are expected to comport yourself in class just as you would as a professional in the ‘real world’. You are expected to be on time, pay attention, refrain from talking in class or other interruptions, or engage in other distractions (text messaging, surfing the web on your computer, etc).

*Cell phones must be turned off and put away prior to class* (along with any other electronic device that will ring, buzz, or make other noises/flash lights/etc).

Eating and gum chewing are not allowed in class. You may bring water or other non-alcoholic beverages in a spill resistant container for consumption during class.

Failure to behave with proper decorum in class may result in grade penalties.
**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty in any form is not tolerated. By submitting materials to meet course requirements you assert that the work is your own.

This policy is required to encourage consistent ethical behavior among students and to foster a climate of fair competition. Personal integrity is a quality that is expected and respected at the University of Miami. Consequently, the Undergraduate Student Honor Code in is force at all times. Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and upholding the Honor Code which is available from the Office of the Dean of Students.

All work submitted in this class must be original work and cannot be submitted to more than one class. Your grade in the class and student status may be affected by any violations. In addition to grade penalties – including failing the course – violations of academic integrity will be referred to the Honor Council for further action.

Students may not work together on graded assignments without express permission or unless explicitly indicated on the course syllabus.

**Email:** Email is the most reliable way to reach me. Although I try to respond quickly, I do not check email constantly so expect delays of up to 12-24 hours during the week and occasionally no response between Friday afternoon and Monday morning. If you need to reach me, please plan ahead. When sending an email message, please include your full name and the course number.

For class related communication, I will use the email address you have listed in Blackboard (the one you registered through MyUM) to contact you, including any important announcements, so it is important to make sure that your email account listed with MyUM is up-to-date.

**Accessibility Resources:** Reasonable accommodations will be provided by the instructor or through Accessibility Resources (AR) for students who have a documented disability and are registered with AR. Please contact me by e-mail or during office hours during the first two weeks of school if you will be working with AR to arrange alternative accommodations. Students may speak with the instructor or contact Accessibility Resources at (305) 284-2374 or for more information about receiving classroom accommodations.

**Participation:** This is a seminar, so you are expected to contribute to the discussion each week. Contributions may include questions for the professor and/or classmates, critiques of the readings, debates about relevant issues/questions.

Part of participation is being prepared for class. You cannot fully participate in the discussions if you are not prepared. Since this is a 500 level seminar, there is a significant amount of reading. I expect that you will spend about 5 hours each week to complete reading, although there is some variation by weeks.

All students should be prepared to provide a brief synopsis of any or all of the readings assigned for the week. If folks appear to not be adequately prepared for class, I reserve the right to pop-quizzes and other techniques. Please be prepared, you don't want be the one who forces me to impose these sorts of things on your classmates.

All class discussions must be conducted in a respectful manner. Any insulting, demeaning, threatening, or other inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Should such behavior occur, you will be asked to leave the class immediately and your participation grade will be significantly impacted. Repeated violations may result in failing the course.
**Reading Responses:** For each class, you will be required to do a reading response. This will ensure that you are prepared for the class discussion each week. The responses should reflect thinking about and responding to the readings, not merely summarizing what the authors have to say. I want to know what you think about the readings.

The following questions are not the only ways to approach to the reading responses, but they are intended to help you get started:

- What do we learn from the readings together that might not be clear from a single piece of research?
- Does one reading inspire you to think differently about the other? Why? How?
- Is one reading building on the other(s)? If so, in what way?
- Do they come to different conclusions? If so, why?

The reading responses should be about 1.5-2 pages (double spaced, normal margins and font). No more than 2 pages. This should require you to be clear, concise, and compelling.

*Reading responses are due in my email (cmann@miami.edu) by 6:25pm on Sunday before each class (24 hours in advance) so that they can be incorporated into the discussion.*

**Final Project:** As a seminar, half of your grade depends on the final project. You will be building towards this project in discussions and reading responses throughout the semester. The details will be provided separately, but the basic idea is that you will prepare a ‘briefing’ to policy makers (e.g. state legislators, county clerks, Secretaries of State) about a proposed change in election administration. You will develop the proposed change, discuss existing research related to the change, gaps in the existing research, an assessment of the benefits and risks of making the change, a plan for facilitate the transition from the old rules to the new rules, and your conclusion about why the need for change is compelling.

On April 1st (not an April Fools Day joke), you will turn in a one-page proposal for your final project. We will discuss the proposals in class, so that you get feedback and guidance from me and your classmates as you start to work on the project.

The report should be approximately 25 pages of double-spaced text, with additional pages for tables, charts, and other graphics as appropriate. I will provide you with guidelines about formatting and bibliography.

**Grading:** The class will be graded based upon participation, reading responses, and your final project. The final project has two phases: a presentation and a paper.

- Participation: 25%
- Reading Responses: 25%
- Final Paper & Presentation: 50%

I am willing to review the assignment of a grade you believe to be incorrect, but a request to review a grade means that I will fully reconsider the grade assigned. Therefore, the assigned grade may go up or down based on my review.

**Late Submission of Assignments:** Late assignments will either not be accepted or will incur a grade penalty unless they are due to documented serious illness or a family emergency. Start papers early and protect yourself against computer failures. Retain an electronic version of your paper for security.
Course Website: All students officially registered for the course can access the course’s Blackboard website at: www.miami.edu/blackboard. Your Blackboard User Name is your UM Email Alias (you can find your UM Email Alias on MyUM at www.miami.edu/myum) and your initial password is your birth date. The Blackboard site includes a course syllabus, announcements, readings, assignments, and any other relevant course information.

Class Cancellation: In the event a class is canceled (due to natural disaster, instructor illness, etc.) you are still responsible for having done the work assigned on this syllabus by its due date.

Required Reading: Most of the readings for the course are posted on Blackboard. In order to keep the cost of materials to a minimum, I have not required that you purchase any books. Several books for the course are available from the UM Richter Library using the on-line eBook system.

In addition to the assigned readings below, you should sign up for the weekly emails from ElectionLine.org and check the postings on election administration at the electionupdates.caltech.edu, electionlawblog.org, and electionline.org.
## Course Outline & Readings

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/14/2013</td>
<td><strong>Why the Rules of The Game Matter</strong></td>
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<td>1/21/2013</td>
<td><strong>No Class - Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday</strong></td>
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<td>1/28/2013</td>
<td><strong>Perspectives on Election Reform</strong></td>
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<td>Alexander Keyssar, <em>The Right to Vote</em>, Introduction, pp. 1-2, pp. 61-63,</td>
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<td>p.179, Chapters 8-9</td>
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<td>David Hill, <em>American Voter Turnout</em>, Chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>(Available at: <a href="http://www.vote.caltech.edu/drupal/files/report/voting_what_is_what_could_be.pdf">www.vote.caltech.edu/drupal/files/report/voting_what_is_what_could_be.pdf</a>)</td>
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<td>Molly Ball, &quot;Gaming the 2012 Vote&quot;, <em>Politico</em>, June 5, 2011</td>
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### Additional Readings


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<th>2/4/2013</th>
<th><strong>Measuring Democracy</strong></th>
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<tr>
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<td>Heather Gerken, <em>The Democracy Index</em>, Introduction &amp; Chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>Pew Center on the States, &quot;Election Administration by the Numbers: An</td>
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<td>Analysis of Available Datasets and How to Use Them&quot;, February 2012</td>
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<td><em>(Posted on Blackboard)</em></td>
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<td>Robert Montjoy, &quot;The Public Administration of Elections&quot;, *Public</td>
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<td>Administration Review*, 2008</td>
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### Additional Readings

Pew Center on the States, "Data for Democracy" *(Available at: [www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/Final%20DFD.pdf](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/Final%20DFD.pdf))*


Bruce Cain, "Reform Studies: Political Science on the Firing Line", PS: Political Science, 2007 *(Posted on Blackboard)*
2/11/2013  Voter Registration


Steve Ansolabehere & David Konisky, "The Introduction of Voter Registration and Its Effect on Turnout", Political Analysis, 2006. (Posted on Blackboard)


Additional Readings


Benjamin Highton, "Residential Mobility, Community Mobility, and Electoral Participation" Political Behavior, 2000. (Posted on Blackboard)

Barreto et al, "ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION (OLVR) SYSTEMS IN ARIZONA AND WASHINGTON: EVALUATING USAGE, PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES", 2010. Part I only


2/18/ 2013  Polling Places - Part 1

**Quality of Polling Places**


**Location of Polling Places**

James Gimpel, Josh Dyck, & Daron Shaw, "Location, knowledge and time pressures in the spatial structure of convenience voting", Electoral Studies, 2006. ([Posted on Blackboard](#))


**Additional Readings - Quality of Polling Places**


New Organizing Institute, "Lost Voters, Lost Votes: When Citizens Don't Know Where to Vote Democracy Loses", 2010. ([Posted on Blackboard](#))

**Additional Readings - Location of Polling Places**

Josh Dyck & James Gimpel, "Distance, Turnout, and the Convenience of Voting", Social Science Quarterly, 2005. ([Posted on Blackboard](#))


James Gimpel & J.E. Schuknecht, "Political participation and the accessibility of the ballot box", Political Geography, 2003. ([Posted on Blackboard](#))

Polling place experience

Benjamin Highton, "Long lines, voting machine availability, and turnout: The case of Franklin County, Ohio in the 2004 presidential election. PS: Political Science, 2006. (Posted on Blackboard)

Thad Hall, Quin Monson and Kelly Patterson, "The Human Dimension of Elections: How Poll Workers Shape Public Confidence in Elections", Political Research Quarterly, 2009. (Posted on Blackboard)

Technology


Herrnson et al, Voting Technologies, Chapter 3 (Available as an eBook from Richter Library @ https://ibisweb.miami.edu/record=b4278211~S1)

Additional Readings - Polling place experience


Ryan Claasen, David Magelby, Quin Monson, & Kelly Patterson, “At Your Service: Voter Evaluations of Poll Worker Performance”, American Politics Research, 2008. (Posted on Blackboard)


Additional Readings - Technology

Michael Alvarez & Thad Hall, Electronic Elections, Chapters 1-3


Herrnson et al, Voting Technologies, Chapters 1-2 & 4-5 (Available as an eBook from Richter Library @ https://ibisweb.miami.edu/record=b4278211~S1)

Herrnson et al, Voting Technologies, Chapters 6-7 (Available as an eBook from Richter Library @ https://ibisweb.miami.edu/record=b4278211~S1)


3/4/2013  **Voter ID**

_Crawford v. Marion County Board of Elections_, 2008, US Supreme Court (Opinion, Concurrency, and 2 Dissents)


Lonna Atkeson, Lisa Bryant, Michael Alvarez, Kyle Saunders, & Thad Hall, "A new barrier to participation: Heterogeneous application of voter identification policies", _Electoral Studies_, 2010. (Posted on Blackboard)

Richard Sobel, "Editor's Introduction", _PS: Political Science_, 2009. (Posted on Blackboard)

Majorie Randon Hershey, "What We Know about Voter-ID Laws, Registration & Turnout", _PS: Political Science_, 2009. (Posted on Blackboard)


Timothy Vercellotti and David Andersen, "Voter-Identification Requirements and the Learning Curve", _PS: Political Science_, 2009. (Posted on Blackboard)


3/4/2013  **No Class - SPRING BREAK**
3/18/2013  Convenience Voting


Additional Readings


3/25/2013  Convenience Voting & Turnout


Thad Kousser & Megan Mullin, "Does Voting by Mail Increase Participation? Using Matching to Analyze a Natural Experiment", Political Analysis, 2007. (Posted on Blackboard)


Christopher B. Mann, "Mobilization for Early In-Person Voting: Turnout, Method of Voting, and the Role of Convenience". 2013


Additional Readings


Alan Gerber, Greg Huber, & Seth Hill, "Identifying the Effects of All-Mail Elections on Turnout: Staggered Reform in the Evergreen State", 2011
Christopher Mann, Rachel Sondheimer & Pam Anderson, "Cost Effective Voter Education by Clerks in All Mail Voting Settings", Report to the Pew Center on the States, 2009. *(Posted on Blackboard)*
Christopher Mann & Genevieve Mayhew, "Voter Mobilization Meets eGovernment: Turnout and Voting by Mail from Online or Paper Ballot Request", Journal of Political Marketing, 2013. *(Posted on Blackboard)*
Michael Hanmer & Michael Traugott, "The impact of voting by mail on voter behavior", American Politics Research, 2004. *(Posted on Blackboard)*
Grant Neely & Lilliard Richardson, "Who is early voting? An individual level examination" The Social Science Journal, 2001. *(Posted on Blackboard)*
4/1/2013  Internet Voting

Prospectus Due for Final Project

Alvarez & Hall, Point, Click, Vote, Chapters 1-3  (Available as an eBook from Richter Library @ https://ibisweb.miami.edu/record=b3871127~S11)

Additional Readings

Alvarez & Hall, Point, Click, Vote, Chapters 5-8  (Available as an eBook from Richter Library @ https://ibisweb.miami.edu/record=b3871127~S11)

4/8/2013  Voter Fraud

Michael Alvarez, Thad Hall & Susan Hyde (editors), Election Fraud, esp. Chapters 1-2, Chapters 4-7, Conclusion

Minnesota Majority, "Report on Fraudulent Votes Cast by Ineligible Felons in Minnesota’s 2008 General Election", 2010

Kris Kobach (KS Secretary of State), "Voter ID laws are good protection against fraud", Washington Post, 2011.

Additional Readings


4/15/2013  **Public Confidence**


Michael Alvarez, Thad Hall & Morgan Llewellyn, "Are Americans Confident Their Ballots are Counted", *Journal of Politics*, 2008 *(Posted on Blackboard)*

Lonna Atkeson & Kyle Saunders "The Effect of Election Administration on Voter Confidence: A Local Matter?", *PS: Political Science*, 2007 *(Posted on Blackboard)*


**Additional Readings**


4/22/2013  **Presentations of final project (in class - Graduating Seniors)**

5/6/2013  **Presentations of final project (5-7:30pm)**

**Final project due via email**

*The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule and syllabus with notice to the students.*