

Updated 11/16/16

**POL 5: America Decides
(Contemporary Problems of the American Political System)
University of California, Davis**

Fall 2016
M & W 8:00–9:50am
Hunt 100

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Who will be elected president on Nov. 8? How did Clinton and Trump become the presumptive nominees? Have Americans already made up their minds, or do the campaigns still have a chance to influence voters? What role has money played? How about the media? We'll discuss all these questions and many more this fall in POL 5.

This course has two main goals: First, to understand the forces that shape the outcome of U.S. presidential elections. Second, to build students' skills as social scientists, enabling a more informed lens through which to view and interpret presidential elections for years to come.

By the end of the quarter, successful students should be able to:

- Understand the formal and informal rules that govern U.S. presidential elections
- Identify the forces that shape presidential election outcomes
- Search for, identify, and analyze election-related social science data
- Utilize critical-thinking tools to search for and evaluate election news

Most classes will include some slide-based lectures, but the course is also designed around significant amounts discussion, both in small groups and as an entire class. Regardless of class size, I expect participation. So come to class ready to discuss things; if things are confusing, come with questions. If you do not participate of your own initiative, be prepared to be called on in class. The more you participate in discussion, the better the class will be and the easier it will be for you to learn more and, ultimately, earn a better grade.

A syllabus is like a contract, so I've tried to specify lots of details in the document to follow, sometimes in relatively harsh language. Don't be turned off. We'll read a wide variety of very interesting things and you'll learn a lot in this class. I am excited to teach it and am looking forward to each week of what follows. I certainly hope it will be one of the best courses you ever take.

Class Expectations

Please abide by the following classroom etiquette. I have developed this set of expectations not to be Draconian, but because outlining these guidelines at the beginning of every course helps me focus my time and attention less on logistical issues and more on teaching. I find the material I teach tremendously exciting, and I love teaching it.

Canvas

All information for the course can be accessed on the UC Davis Canvas web page for this course. Please do not email questions until you have double-checked these resources documents for the answer.

Email

I welcome email questions and comments, as do TAs. When you email me or a TA, you should compose your email as you would any piece of professional correspondence. Specifically:

- So that I know which course you are emailing about, be sure to include POL5 below your name AND in the subject line of the email.
- Begin the email with a salutation (e.g., "Dear Professor Boydston," "Hi Dr. Boydston"). It is ridiculous to start a professional email without a salutation. "Hey" does not count.
- Use a capital letter to start the first word of each sentence and every proper noun.
- Use complete sentences, correct spelling and correct punctuation. Texting language is for texting. Professional emails require full use of the English language, which (by the way) is a lovely language.
- Be courteous and respectful.
- Sign off with "Sincerely," or "Best," or the equivalent, and below this line write your first and last name in your first email and then just your first name thereafter, followed by POL5.

Email etiquette applies to emails you send to a TA as well as those you send to me; be conscientious. We will respond to your emails as quickly as possible, but please do not expect a quick response to email sent on weekends or after 5pm on any day. That said, remember that the TA(s) and I really are very excited to hear your questions and thoughts about the class or related topics.

Lecture Slides

Lecture slides will be available on Canvas, usually by the morning of a given lecture. Feel free to print out the slides prior to class. Given that I make these slides available for you to download, I will probably go faster than it takes you to copy down all the material on the slide. However, I am always happy to slow down, repeat myself, or explain an idea further if you have questions about the material. Be warned that the material on the slides usually does not include all the important information we will cover in class. The slides are designed to help structure your note taking and studying—not to replace it. Thus, I encourage you to attend class each day. If you miss a class I encourage you to talk with a fellow student to get filled in on what you missed and, of course, ask me or the TA(s) if you have questions. Assigned readings are required, even if we do not discuss them in detail in class.

Desk Name Tag (yep, you read that correctly!)

Even in large lecture classes, I try to foster as much class discussion as possible. Toward that aim, I ask that you place a “desk name tag” on the desk in front of you in class each day. Although attendance will rarely be taken, showing up to class with your desk name tag will help your participation grade. The best way to make this name tag is to take a 8½ x 11 inch piece of construction paper or lightweight cardboard, fold it in half lengthwise (so it’s now 4¼ x 11 inches), and write your name on one side so that your name is upright when you put the folded piece of paper like a tent on the desk in front of you. Please write your full name (**FIRST AND LAST**—using whatever name you prefer to be called as your first name) in **LARGE, VERY DARK, BOLD** letters.

Laptops and Other Electronics

I love my laptop. And my phone. And my tablet. And I understand how tempting it can be to look at one’s electronic devices instead of the person at the front of the room. To conquer this temptation, I ask that you resort to old-school pen-and-paper notetaking during lectures and discussions. If you have a documented learning disorder that is helped by typing your notes, feel free to talk with me and I will be happy to consider an exception (although it doesn’t mean I’ll grant one). But feel free to bring your electronic devices to work on your projects. Finally, just like at the movies, please silence your phones.

Talking in Class

I hope you will talk in class (a lot!) to facilitate rich class discussions. When you talk in class, please talk **LOUDLY** so that others can hear you. If you have something to say that you do not want everyone to hear then please—for the love of Jiminy Cricket—resist the urge to talk to your neighbor during class and say it after class instead.

Required Readings

Readings will be assigned throughout the quarter, and all will be available as a pdf or a web link on Canvas.

Grading

Participation	15%
Electoral College Game	15%
Election Forecast Report	15%
Election Analysis Report	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total:	100%
<i>Possible Extra Credit: Experiment</i>	<i>1%</i>

The final letter grade will be assigned according to the standard table:

97-100: A+	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+
93-96: A	83-86: B	73-76: C	63-66: D
90-92: A-	80-82: B-	70-72: C-	60-62: D-
			00-59: F

Grading will be performed as follows: The TA(s) and I work collaboratively to develop a grading system for all graded items. As for the actual grades assigned to you, the TA(s) alone are responsible, and their word on grades is final. Of course, they will consult with me throughout the grading process. But I will not override their grading decisions. I do not round grades up. So, for example, a final grade of 89.8 is a B+, not an A-. See the potential opportunity for extra credit, below.

Participation

Your participation grade will be based on the overall effort you put into the class, including the effort you put into your research project assignments, your class attendance AND discussion section (with desk name tag—see above), and your participation in class discussions. Although attendance will only rarely be taken, it's amazing how quickly an instructor and TAs can differentiate the students who attend and participate from those who do not. Thus, do not assume that you will receive full marks for your participation grade automatically; you must earn every point yourself. Come to class, participate in class discussions, earn a good participation grade, and get more out of the class. It's a win-win situation. And if you're particularly shy (and even if you're not), consider visiting myself and the TA(s) during office hours.

Beware—Everything's Fair Game for Exam Questions

Three kinds of information may appear on exams:

- 1) Material from the readings, even if we do not discuss it in class.
- 2) Material discussed in class, even if it is not covered in the readings.
- 3) Skills and insights you develop in your research assignments, even if they are not covered in the readings or explicitly discussed in class.

Midterm Exam and Final Exam

Both exams are closed-note and must be completed independently. Any attempt to smuggle in answers or copy from another student will constitute a violation of academic integrity.

Short of extraordinary circumstances, you will not be allowed to make up an exam. If you have planned circumstances that you believe qualify as extraordinary (e.g., a non-flexible commitment), you must contact me regarding these circumstances at least two weeks in advance of the exam in question. Otherwise, you will only be allowed to make up an exam in the event of extreme and unpredictable circumstances (e.g., a hospitalization or a sudden death in the family) and then only if you provide documentation that verifies—to my personal level of satisfaction—the circumstances that made it impossible for you to take the exam as scheduled. In the event that you do take a makeup exam, be advised that in addition to receiving a different version of the written exam you would have received in class, you may also be required to complete additional essay questions and/or answer oral exam questions that will count toward your make-up exam grade.

Projects (Electoral College Game, Election Forecast Report, and Election Analysis Report)

Instructions for each of these projects will be distributed throughout the quarter. For the Electoral

College Game, students will be randomly assigned to groups (e.g., 3-5) students within their section. All students listed on the project will receive the same base grade, plus an additional portion of the grade that reflects students' evaluations of their teammates' contributions. For the Election Forecast Report and Election Analysis Report, students may work on their own or—as we suggest—work within a group. For these reports, all students with their name on the report will receive the same grade.

Late Projects

Research assignments (Electoral College Game, Election Forecast Report, and Election Analysis Report) are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Period.

In the absence of extreme circumstances (documented to my personal level of satisfaction), **projects turned in after the due date will be accepted but marked down ten percentage points (i.e., one letter grade) for each 24 hours or portion thereof after the deadline**, including weekends, holidays, school breaks, etc. For example, an assignment due Monday at 8am but not turned in until sometime between 8am on Wednesday and 8am on Thursday of the same week would be marked down 30% (three letter grades) below the earned grade (e.g., from a 95% (A) to a 65% (D)). Bottom line: Don't go there.

Also note that in today's age of cloud services like Dropbox and external hard drives, there's no excuse for not having your work backed up. If your computer crashes / is stolen / becomes self-aware the week your assignment is due, we will feel very bad for you, but we will not grant an extension.

Note: You are responsible for staying in touch with the TA(s) and with me throughout the quarter about your progress on your projects, especially if you experience any difficulties.

Extra Credit Experiment

At some point in the quarter, you might be invited to participate in a social science experiment conducted in the Department of Political Science. It usually takes only about 15 minutes to participate in this kind of experiment, and doing so offers a neat way of seeing behind the scenes of the social science research that you will read about in this and other classes. Your responses in this experiment are completely anonymous. You will receive 1% extra credit on your final grade simply for showing up and participating. More information about this opportunity will be provided in class.

Grade Appeals

You may appeal a grade by submitting a written request to the TA(s) in two forms, both electronically and in hard copy (you should also CC me on the email). Appeals are due within one week of receiving the grade in question. Your written appeal should explain, in logical and concise (and polite) terms, why you believe you should have received a different grade. The TA(s) will take all grade appeals seriously, but be warned that once you appeal a grade they will reconsider that grade with an open mind, and re-grades can happen in either direction. If this reevaluation reveals that you deserved a higher grade than you received, your grade will be changed in your favor. If this process reveals that you deserved a lower grade than you received, your grade will be changed downward. If your original grade is deemed correct, your grade will remain the same.

Disabilities

UC Davis encourages qualified students with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. I am strongly committed to the same policy. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Student Disability Center at (530) 752-3184 as soon as possible to identify and document your specific needs. Additionally, it is your responsibility to contact me privately immediately at the beginning of the quarter (i.e., within the first week) so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. Do not wait until just before an assignment deadline or an exam to inform me of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

Academic Dishonesty¹

UC Davis and the Department of Political Science take violations of academic dishonesty seriously, as do I. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the UC Davis community are required to subscribe. In cases of a violation of academic integrity, it is policy to impose appropriate penalties that are consistent with University guidelines. Academic integrity cases will be sent to the office of Student Judicial Affairs.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless I clearly state otherwise. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. See the following link for tips on how to avoid plagiarism: <<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf>>. In general, every time you use another person's idea, you must cite the person at the end of the sentence in which you use the idea. Every time you use a specific phrase, even if the phrase is only two words long (e.g., "the fourth branch of government" or "streams of policymaking"), you must put the phrase in quotation marks and cite the original author at the end of the sentence in which you use the phrase. Citations should be based on the Chicago Manual of Style. See the following link for citations guidelines: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>.

In an examination setting, unless I give explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist of any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices (including the internet!), or of any attempt to give assistance, whether or not the one so doing has completed his or her own work. Other violations include, but are not limited to, any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in regard to an examination, such as tampering with a graded exam or claiming another's work to be one's own. Specifically, collaborating with another person to complete independent work constitutes cheating.

Violations also consist of obtaining or attempting to obtain copies of exams, assignments, or any other course materials from earlier versions of this course. Lying to or misleading me or a TA also constitutes a serious violation of academic integrity.

¹ Much of the text in this section has been directly obtained from the sections of the Princeton University website on Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities: <<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/rrr>>.

Sexual Harassment Resources

UC Davis is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

Confidential support and academic advocacy can be found with several campus resources, including CARE (Center for Advocacy, Resources and Education) at (530) 752-3299 and Counseling Services at (530) 752-2349. More information here:

http://sexualviolence.ucdavis.edu/docs/sexual_violence_support_brochure_jul15.pdf

Weekly Topics & Due Dates

The table below shows exam dates, and research project deadlines. This table does NOT show required readings, which will be available on Canvas. You should do each day's readings before that day's class. I'll generally keep us on schedule, but note that discussions may run over from one class to the next.

Date	Notes	DUE
Week 0: Overview		
Wed, Sept 21		
Week 1: Why these candidates? What do people like/dislike about them?		
Mon, Sept 26	Electoral College Game Instructions <i>6pm in Olson 6: Viewing Party for 1st Presidential Debate! (You don't need to attend, but content from the debate will be on the midterm, so plan to watch it one way or another.)</i>	
Wed, Sept 28		
Week 2: What is the role of "the" media?		
Mon, Oct 3		Electoral College Game Round I Due
<i>Tuesday, Oct 4</i>	<i>Vice Presidential Debate (NOT required to watch—but encouraged!)</i>	
Wed, Oct 5		
Week 3: What is the role of (mis)information?		
<i>Sun, Oct 9</i>	<i>2nd Presidential Debate!</i> <i>6pm in Hunt 100: Viewing Party for 2nd Presidential Debate! (You don't need to attend, but content from the debate will be on the midterm, so plan to watch it one way or another.)</i>	
Mon, Oct 10		Electoral College Game Round II Due
Wed, Oct 12	<i>Guest lecture by Professor Peter van Aelst</i>	
Week 4: How do polls work?		
Mon, Oct 17		
Wed, Oct 19	Election Forecast Instructions <i>3rd Presidential Debate</i>	Electoral College Game Round III Due
Week 5: What is the role of money?		
Mon, Oct 24		
Wed, Oct 26	<i>Election Forecast Workshop</i>	

Date	Topic	DUE / NOTES
Week 6: Review & Midterm		
Mon, Oct 31		
Wed, Nov 2	Midterm Exam	
Week 7: Election preview and post-mortem (and independent and “swing” voters)		
Mon, Nov 7		Election Forecast Report Due
<i>Tues, Nov 8</i>	<i>ELECTION DAY: Get out and vote!</i>	
Wed, Nov 9		
Week 8:		
Mon, Nov 14		
Wed, Nov 16		
Week 9: Election Analysis Reports		
Mon, Nov 21	Election Analysis Report Workshop	
Wed, Nov 23	No Class (Happy Thanksgiving!)	
Week 10: Election Analysis Research Flash Talks		
Mon, Nov 28		
Wed, Nov 30	Life Lessons	Election Analysis Report Due
FINALS WEEK		
Thursday, Dec 8 3:30pm in Hunt 100	Final Exam	