I. Course Description

This seminar in Political Behavior will provide an examination of mass political behavior in the United States, with a focus on voting behavior, elections, and political participation. We will cover the basic works in a number of the subject areas of the subfield, considering the major questions, critiques, and alternatives in each topic. The reading, at times, will be heavy, and you should plan on reading throughout the week. Your reward for this hard work will be a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the intellectual issues and conflicts in the voting behavior field. This knowledge should set the stage for your own further exploration of the subject, both in keeping up with the literature and in your original research.

II. Course Requirements

1. Class Participation: Class participation will be composed of weekly discussion papers, class participation, and participation in 3 roundtables. The weekly papers are intended to provoke thoughtful consideration of some aspect of the week's readings. They are to be short, around 1 single spaced page. The goal of these papers is to point out some important issue in the readings. This could be a single point raised by one author or perhaps a theme common to several of the readings. Other possibilities include juxtaposing and commenting on alternative explanations or approaches to a substantive topic, criticizing the methodologies used and proposing other strategies of research, criticizing the conceptualization or measurement of a particular construct, suggesting new questions and hypotheses for research, or developing similarities or contrasts with themes covered in previous weeks. Other angles are possible of course, but the paper should address the issue, then consider its implications. What questions does it raise and how might you approach the resolution of those questions? In addition, the papers need to include a question that can be used to stimulate discussion during the seminar meeting that week. These papers will be used as the basis for discussion, and you may be called upon to present your ideas for class consideration. They are due by noon Tuesday of each week. Emailing them to me is fine.

In addition, students will also be required to serve as roundtable participants for three class meetings during the semester. I will explain the sign up process the first day of class, but for most weeks 4 or 5 of you will be the main roundtable participants. The other members of the seminar will be expected to participate as well, but the roundtable participants will be responsible for describing the assigned readings for that week, thus setting the stage for discussion of the readings. Roundtable participants should probably meet early in the week to decide how to divvy up the readings. That is your collective action problem. You don’t need to write papers, but you should certainly prepare notes for your presentation. Be sure to describe and explain the research problem, relevant background theory, hypotheses, method of analysis, and the findings. In general we’ll leave it to the larger seminar group to comment on the soundness of the evidence or the larger significance of the research, among other things, but if you want to comment on other aspects of the research, that’s fine. In addition, each roundtable participant will be required to write a one page report on an additional reading on the topic of the week. These readings can come from the recommended readings listed on the syllabus, or from some other source as long as it fits the theme of the week. These additional reports do not have to be described in class, although you can certainly draw on them in the class discussion. They are to be emailed to me so I can compile a master list of additional readings that I will distribute to the class around the middle of November. During weeks
you are a roundtable participant, you will NOT be required to turn in the regular weekly discussion paper. (50% of course grade)

(2) Research Paper: The research paper should represent a more detailed consideration of one of the topics on the syllabus. The different options for this paper will be discussed in the first class meeting. Since you will probably need to read beyond the required set of articles for the paper, you should consult with me early in the semester so that I can direct you to any additional readings and so that we can agree that the topic is a promising one. From experience I have learned that the analysis portion of a research project usually takes more time than anticipated. Therefore, by the seventh week of the course (October 9th) you should prepare a brief prospectus (2-3 pages) on your project. We will use part of the class period that week to present and discuss these proposals. This proposal should include:

1. The research question (briefly)
2. Identification of relevant literature.
3. Data sources and relevant variables in these data. How are the variables measured and how are they supposed to be related to each other?

The paper should be about 5000 words long and should follow the structure and format of a typical journal article. (50% of course grade)

III. Readings

Readings that cannot be obtained through required texts or JSTOR will be made available through moodle or some other distribution system. I’ve ordered the following texts and put them on reserve at Middleton Library (except for Niemi and Weisberg, which is not in the library). I’ve also put Fiorina’s book on Retrospective Voting on reserve. The first three books are listed as required and the latter three as recommended, but I realize your finances will probably dictate which books you actually purchase.

Downs, Anthony. 1954. An Economic Theory of Democracy

Popkin, 1994. The Reasoning Voter
Course Outline

**Week 1 August 28 – Introduction and overview of the course**


**Week 2 September 4 – Voting Behavior: The Classics**


**Recommended**


**Week 3 September 11 – Social Influence Models of Voting Behavior: Contexts and Networks**


Recommended


**Week 4 September 18 – Party Identification and Party System Change**


Recommended


**Week 5 September 25 – Partisan Polarization**


Recommended


**Week 6 October 2 – Voter Turnout**


**Recommended**


**Week 7 October 9 – Political Information: Information Effects and Uncertainty**

***Proposal Presentations***


Recommended


Week 8 October 16 – Turnout II: Campaign Mobilization


Recommended


Week 9 October 23 - Media Effects


Recommended


Week 10 October 30 - Issues in the Vote Choice


Recommended


Lewis, Jeffrey and Gary King. 2000. "No Evidence on Directional versus Proximity Voting." Political Analysis 8:21-34.


**Week 11 November 6 - Congressional Elections**


Recommnded


**Week 12 November 13 – Economic Voting**


Recommended


**Week 13 November 20 – Voter Choice**


Recommended


Week 14 November 27 – Genopolitics


Recommended


**Week 15 December 4 – Presentation of Posters**