POLI 228: Elections and Representation  
(Spring 2014)

Course Description:

This course provides a PhD-level overview of the scientific study of political representation and its connection to elections and electoral institutions. Though technically categorized as an “institutions” course, this seminar will consider both individual and aggregate-level perspectives on representation and thus contains a significant “behavior” component.

Intended Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

At the end of this course, students should:

1. Have a thorough understanding of empirical theories of political representation and efforts to test these theories (corresponds with PLO 1/2)  
2. Demonstrate the ability to use social scientific tools to conduct research on political representation (corresponds with PLOs 3, 4, and 5)  

General Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for the Political Science Ph.D. Program:

1. A comprehensive graduate-level understanding of processes, theories, and empirical regularities in the student’s major area of emphasis (Political Institutions and Political Economy or Political Cognition and Behavior).  
2. A graduate-level understanding of processes, theories, and empirical regularities in the student’s minor area of emphasis (Political Institutions and Political Economy or Political Cognition and Behavior).  
3. Competency with contemporary social science methods used to conduct rigorous research on political phenomena.  
4. Effective scientific communication skills, especially the ability to convey complex concepts and information in a clear and concise manner.  
5. The ability to initiate and conduct independent research that makes an original contribution to political science knowledge of a quality that can be published in a peer reviewed outlet.
Requirements:

(1) Prior to class, you must read all of the required readings for the week. You are then expected
to discuss your insights, criticisms, and questions with the rest of the group when we meet. This
course does not follow a lecture format! The success of the seminar depends upon your
participation. The quantity and quality of your weekly participation will constitute 40% of your
grade for the course.

(2) Each week, you are to formulate two questions that should help stimulate discussion when we
meet. These questions should be e-mailed to me at least 12 hours before we are scheduled to
meet. Keep in mind that truly good discussion questions take some thought. 10% of your grade
will be based on the quality of your weekly questions.

(3) You will write an original research paper in which you identify an interesting research
question, review the relevant literature, provide your theoretical answer to the question you pose,
and test your theoretical expectations by utilizing an appropriate research design and suitable
data. Your paper should be article length (i.e., 15-20 pages) and should be of sufficient quality
that it could be presented at a political science conference and, perhaps after revisions, published
in a peer-reviewed journal. If you like, you may collaborate (i.e., coauthor) with another student
when researching and writing this paper. I require that you meet with me to talk with me about
your paper topic by the fourth week of the semester. Your paper will represent 40% of your
course grade.

(4) Students will present their papers at the end of the semester. We will emulate a conference
setting, which means that each of you will get approximately 10 minutes to present your paper. I
will act as the discussant and other faculty may be present to ask questions. Your presentation
will be worth 10% of your course grade.

Books:

Required:

Powell, G. Bingham, Jr. 2000. Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and
Proportional Visions. Yale University Press.


Cambridge University Press.

Additional required readings are listed below.
Class Schedule:

1/27: Conceptualizing Representation

Required:


Recommended:


2/3: Social Choice Theory

Required:


Recommended:


2/10: The Spatial Model of Representation: Voters

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


2/24: The Spatial Model of Representation: Voter Participation

*Required:*


Recommended:


3/3:  The Spatial Model of Representation: Candidates, Parties, and Policy Makers

Required:


**Recommended:**


**3/10: The Spatial Model of Elections and Representation: Part IV**

**Required:**


**3/17: Consequences and Selection of Electoral Institutions**

**Required:**


Recommended:


4/1 – 4/4 (TBD): Representation and Performance Voting

Required:


Recommended:


4/7: **Interest Representation: Emergence and Maintenance of Organized Interests**

Required:


**Recommended:**


4/14: Interest Representation: Influencing Policy

Required:


Recommended:


4/21: Representation Where You Least Expect It? (Courts and Agencies)

Required:


**Recommended:**


4/28: Descriptive Representation

Required:


Recommended:


5/5: Representation and Policy Agendas

Required:


**Recommended:**


**TBA:** Presentations