

**POL261 – Political Behavior
Fall 2021**

Instructor

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The purpose of this course is to address the question of what is realistic to expect from elections in a democracy. The book by Achen and Bartels – *Democracy for Realists* – provides an extended analysis and answer. The book’s subtitle – *Why Elections do not Produce Responsive Government* – signals one of their arguments.

As it turns out, *Democracy for Realists* is arguably the most important and influential book published on mass political behavior in the past 20 years (some would say the past 50 years). In this course, we will proceed by reading it and then considering research published after the book that speaks to the validity of some its most important claims.

This course is appropriate for students at all levels of the political science graduate program, including first year students. There will be some overlap in assignments, and there will be some difference in assignments based on where in the program you are. We will discuss the details, expectations, and other aspects of the requirements on the first day of class.

Readings:

In addition to the articles (available on Canvas), there are four books to read:

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections do not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Please read the newer version that includes an afterword about the 2016 presidential election.]

Mason, Liliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Stone, Walter J. 2017. *Candidates and Voters: Ideology, Valence, and Representation in U.S. Elections*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. [Note: If you use an UCD IP address you can access PDFs of the book [here](#). And, [here](#) is information about to establish a UCD IP address remotely.]

White, Ismail K., and Chryl N. Laird. 2020. *Steadfast Democrats: How Social Forces Shape Black Political Behavior*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Assignments/Grades:

Final grades will be based on class attendance/participation (30%), weekly questions (10%), the first writing assignment (20%), and the final writing assignment (40%).

1. Class attendance/participation: Class attendance is self-explanatory. For class participation, students are expected to be able to discuss the weekly readings at more than a superficial level. This does not mean that students are expected to understand all aspects of all of the readings. It does mean that if there is something you do not understand that you have made a sincere attempt to understand it.

2. Weekly questions: To facilitate (1), by Thursday mornings at 9:00 a.m. students should email me a discussion question for that afternoon's seminar meeting. It can be a question that you have about the reading that you do not know the answer to but seems like it is worth knowing. It can be a question you know the answer to and think is important about the reading. It can be very specific, like "What is the key finding in Table X of reading Y?" It can be more general, like "How does the evidence presented in article A speak to the argument about retrospective voting made by Z?" Etc. Students are expected to submit questions for 7 of the 8 seminar meetings (excluding our first meeting).

[Note: We will discuss the following writing assignments in greater detail on the 1st day of class.]

3. Writing assignment #1
 - a. First year students: An annotated bibliography with at least 10 sources that addresses a question TBA.
 - b. Second-Nth year students: A 2-3 page research proposal.
4. Writing assignment #2
 - a. First year students: A 6-8 page essay answering the question addressed in the annotated bibliography.
 - b. Second-Nth year students: an 8-10 page paper answering the question posed in the research proposal.

Reading Schedule – To be completed *before* seminar meetings
[Note: No class on 11/11 (Veterans Day) & 11/25 (Thanksgiving)]

September 23

- Achen and Bartels (2016a)

September 30

- Achen and Bartels (2016b, chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6). Note: for those interested in the initiative and referendum processes that exist in some states, see chapter 3.

Optional:

- Achen and Bartels (2016b, chapter 7)
- Fowler and Hall (2018a)
- Achen and Bartels (2018b)
- Fowler and Hall (2018b).

October 7

- Achen and Bartels (2016b, chapters 8-11 and Afterword)

October 14

- Mason (2018, read chapters 1-5 & 8; skim chapters 6 & 7)

October 21

- White and Laird (2020, read Intro., chapters 1, 3, 4, & Conclusion; skim chapters 2, 5, and 6)

October 28

- Freeder et al (2019)
- Guntermann and Lenz (2020)
- Campbell et al (2018)
- Broockman and Butler (2017)

November 4

- Sides and Tesler (2016, parts 1 and 2)
- Vavreck et al, (2017)
- Mason et al. (2021)
- Cohen et al (2016)

November 18

- Stone (2017, pp. 1-19, 30-34, 45-51, chapters 4, 7, 8 & Conclusion)
- Hall (2015)
- Fowler (2020)

December 2

- Schickler (2018)
- Stokes (2018)
- Galston (2018)
- Fiorina (2018)
- Achen and Bartels (2018a)

Bibliography

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- . 2016b. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections do not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 2018a. "Government for the People: A Reply to the Symposium." *Critical Review* 30 (1-2):139-62.
- . 2018b. "Statistics as If Politics Mattered: A Reply to Fowler and Hall." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (4):1438-53.
- Broockman, David E., and Daniel M. Butler. 2017. "The Causal Effects of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (1):208-21.
- Campbell, David E., Geoffrey C. Layman, John C. Green, and Nathanael G. Sumaktoyo. 2018. "Putting Politics First: The Impact of Politics on American Religious and Secular Orientations." *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (3):551-65.
- Cohen, Marty, Mary C. McGrath, Peter Aronow, and John Zaller. 2016. "Ideologically Extreme Candidates in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1948–2012." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667 (1):126-42.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 2018. "Identities for Realists." *Critical Review* 30 (1-2):49-56.
- Fowler, Anthony. 2020. "Partisan Intoxication or Policy Voting?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15:141-79.
- Fowler, Anthony, and Andrew B. Hall. 2018a. "Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections? Reassessing a Prominent Finding on Voter Competence." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (4):1423-37.
- . 2018b. "Politics as if Evidence Mattered: A Reply to Achen and Bartels."
- Freder, Sean, Gabriel S. Lenz, and Shad Turney. 2019. "The Importance of Knowing "What Goes with What": Reinterpreting the Evidence on Policy Attitude Stability." *The Journal of Politics* 81 (1):274-90.
- Galston, William A. 2018. "Getting Real about Realism: Voters Are More Reasonable, and Democracies More Responsive, than Achen and Bartels Suggest." *Critical Review* 30 (1-2):57-70.
- Guntermann, Eric, and Gabriel Lenz. 2020. "Still Not Important Enough? COVID-19 Policy Views and Vote Choice." ed. B. University of California.
- Hall, Andrew B. 2015. "What Happens When Extremists Win Primaries?" *American Political Science Review* 109 (1):18-42.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Mason, Lilliana, Julie Wronski, and John V. Kane. 2021. "Activating Animus: The Uniquely Social Roots of Trump Support." *American Political Science Review*.
- Schickler, Eric. 2018. "Democracy for Realists, Groups, and Ordinary Voters." *Critical Review* 30 (1-2):119-29.
- Sides, John, and Michael Tesler. 2016. "How Political Science Helps Explain the Rise of Trump." *Washington Post*.
- Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. 2017. "The 2016 U.S. Election: How Trump Lost and Won." *Journal of Democracy* 28 (2):34-44.
- Stokes, Susan. 2018. "Accountability for Realists." *Critical Review* 30 (1-2):130-8.
- Stone, Walter J. 2017. *Candidates and Voters: Ideology, Valence, and Representation in U.S. Elections*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
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