

US Elections: Voters, Issues, and Results

Lecturers: Višeslav Raos Ph.D., Associate professor,

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Winter semester 2025/2026

Course description

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the political and electoral system of the United States. Students will learn more about presidential, congressional, gubernatorial, and primary elections; voting rights; political participation; the effects of the electoral system; gerrymandering; safe and swing seats; the dynamics of the electorate; and electoral system reform. Lecturers will prepare a collection of empirical sources and results from previous elections and will encourage students to analyze the issues and results of those elections.

The outcome of the course will be students' ability to understand and analyze issues in US elections, analyze election results, and present their own ideas for reforming the US electoral process. Students are required to read a weekly collection of texts and participate in the weekly discussion. Instructors determine the final grade based on the student's discussion of the literature and the quality of the submitted research report. Students must prepare a report of 1,000 to 1,500 words and submit it at the conclusion of the lecture series.

Student requirements

Distribution of ECTS credits and grades

1. Class attendance – 0.5 ECTS
2. Reading, group presentation of assigned topics, and discussion of a total of 250 pages of literature (40 pages weekly) – 1.4 ECTS
3. Individual research reports (1,000 to 1,500 words) - 0.6 ECTS

Instructors determine the final grade based on students' regular participation in discussions and the quality of the submitted research report. Students must prepare a research report on any topic addressed during the course.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction, student requirements, and analysis of the 2024 and 2025 United States elections

Week 2 – Primary elections – history, types of primary elections, and party conventions

Week 3 – Electoral College, gerrymandering, safe and swing seats

Week 4 - Historically significant election cycles

Week 5 – Electorate behavior

Week 6 – Civil rights movement, women's suffrage, and Indian Citizenship Act of 1924

Week 7 – Political issues, policies, and party polarization

Required readings

Week 2

Cohen, Marty et. al. (2016) Party Versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System. *Political Science and Politics*. 49(4): 701-708.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096516001682>

Ebner, David (2021) Divisive, polarising, or energising? Primary election competition and candidate performance in U.S. congressional elections. *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 27 (1): 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2020.1790164>

Lawrence, Eric; Donovan, Todd; Bowler, Shaun (2011) The adoption of direct primaries in the United States. *Party Politics*. 19(1): 3-18 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068810393264>

Week 3

Chen, Jowei and Cottrell, David (2016) Evaluating partisan gains from Congressional gerrymandering: Using computer simulations to estimate the effect of gerrymandering in the U.S. House. *Electoral Studies*. 44 (4): 329-340.

Lane, Daniel J. (2022) Are “Safe” or “Swing” Congressional Districts More Paretian? *SSRN* <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4050946>

Week 4

Foreman, Sean D. (2021) The 2020 Elections Overview: A Campaign Cycle Like No Other. In: Foreman, Sean D., Godwin, Marcia L., Wilson, Walter Clark (eds.) *The Roads to Congress 2020*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82521-8_1

Niebler, Sarah (2020) Vote-by-Mail: COVID-19 and the 2020 Presidential Primaries. *Society*. 57: 547-553 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-020-00531-1>

Week 5

Bonica, Adam (2014) Mapping the Ideological Marketplace. *American Journal of Political Science*. 58(2): 367–386.

Campbell, James E. (2005) The Fundamentals in US Presidential Elections: Public Opinion, the Economy and Incumbency in the 2004 Presidential Election. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 15(1): 73-83.

Ware, Alan (2000) Anti-Partism and Party Control of Political Reform in the United States: The Case of the Australian Ballot. *British Journal of Political Science*. 30(1): 1-29

Week 6

Herrick, Rebekah, and Mendez, Jeanette (2018): American Indian party identification: why American Indians tend to be democrats. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1457964>

Niven, David i Solimine, Michael E. (2022) Representing People and Places: Castaway Voters and the Racial Disparity in Redistricting. *Election Law Journal*. 21 (2): 171-186

Thomsen, Danielle M. (2019) Which women win? Partisan changes in victory patterns in US House Elections. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. 7 (2): 412-428.

Week 7

Grossmann, Matt i Hopkins, David A. (2015) Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats: The Asymmetry of American Party Politics. *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (1): 119–139.

Hunt, Charles R. (2021) Beyond Partisanship: Outperforming the Party Label with Local Roots in Congressional Elections. *Congress & the Presidency* 48 (3): 343-372.

Additional references

Algara, Carlos (2021) The Collective “Congress” on the Ballot? A Voter and Aggregate-Level Analysis of Collective Responsibility in Congressional Elections. *Congress & the Presidency* 48(2): 219-264.

Herrick, Rebekah, Davis, Jim, and Pryor, Ben (2020): Are Indigenous Americans unique in their voting in US national elections? *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2020.1782952>

Huyser, Kimberly R., Sanchez, Gabriel R., and Vargas, Edward D. (2016): Civic engagement and political participation among American Indians and Alaska natives in the US. *Politics, Groups, and Identities* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1148058>

Koch, Jeffrey W. (2016) Partisanship and Non-Partisanship Among American Indians. *American Politics Research*. 45(4), 673-691. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X16637122>

Min, Jeonghun, and Savage, Daniel (2014). Why do American Indians vote Democratic? *The Social Science Journal*, 51(2), 167–180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2013.10.015>

Monnat, Shannon M. and Brown, David L. (2017) More than a rural revolt: Landscapes of despair and the 2016 Presidential election. *Journal of Rural Studies*. 55: 227-236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.08.010>

Sadhwani, Sara (2021) The influence of candidate race and ethnicity: the case of Asian Americans. *Politics, Groups, and Identities* DOI: 10.1080/21565503.2021.1877749

Steger, Wayne P. (2003) Presidential Renomination Challenges in the 20th Century. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 33(4): 827-852.

Theiss-Morse, Elizabeth A., and Wagner, Michael W. (2023) *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press

Visalvanich, Neil (2017) When does race matter? Exploring white responses to minority congressional candidates. *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 5 (4): 618-641.

Ware, Alan (2000) Anti-Partism and Party Control of Political Reform in the United States: The Case of the Australian Ballot. *British Journal of Political Science*. 30(1): 1-29

Ware, Alan (2015) The American Experience of Primary Elections in Comparative Perspective. In: Sandri, Giulia; Seddone, Antonella; Venturino, Fulvio (eds.): *Party Primaries in Comparative Perspective*. Surrey: Ashgate