

PSCI 2267: PARTICIPATION and POLITICAL REPRESENTATION in AMERICA

Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University

Spring 2021; T/Th 9:35-10:50 AM
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Course Description

Moments of mass political participation are some of the most celebrated in the history of the United States and yet, many scholars of American democracy bemoan the inefficiencies of political involvement; claim the average American is woefully underprepared to hold their elected officials accountable; and argue that from the stand point of an individual, political participation is largely irrational. In this class, we will interrogate these claims. We will ask: How capable is the demos? Who is represented in a representative democracy? And, why do people participate in politics? Drawing from theory, empirical evidence, and case studies, we will assess the health of America's democracy – it's past, present, and possibilities – and together, reflect on what these concepts suggest for our role as a member of a polity.

Goals and Learning Objectives

The goals of this class are twofold. It will expose you to major questions and approaches in the study of American political representation so as to build your content knowledge and prepare you for further studies of politics into the future. Secondly, it will train you to apply the concepts we learn in your own life. Our focus is on content acquisition, but also on how you might use this content to develop a better sense of yourself in relationship to the polity. In order to meet these goals, by the end of the course you will be able to:

- *Content Acquisition.* Describe, organize, and connect key questions and concepts in the study of American political representation.
- *Analytical Growth.* Develop and define one's sense of what it means to be part of a (democratic) polity; defend this definition by citing theoretical and empirical concepts.
- *Application.* Apply content knowledge to effectively participate in politics.

University and Course Policies

Attendance.

While I will not take attendance after the first few days of class, it will be difficult for you to be successful in this course without regularly attending. Slides will only be made available on request and much of our content will come up in discussions and be on the dry erase board. On the days you are assigned to attend virtually, you will need to do so synchronously unless you have worked out an alternative with Prof. Anoll or the TA.

Academic Honesty.

This course will follow Vanderbilt's high standards of academic honesty, available in detail in the University's Student Handbook: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system/

Reading and Materials.

You are not required to buy any books for this course. All materials will be available on Brightspace. You are, however, expected to print, read, and annotate all of the assigned material before each class. This interaction with the materials is central to this course's construction and to your success. Assignments are designed to assess not only how well you know the content we discuss in class, but how well you build your own ideas from the course content. As a result, performing at an "A" level is possible only if you read the materials.

Technology in the Classroom.

Pedagogical research on teaching and learning shows that students learn and retain more when they handwrite their notes and are free from technological distractions like laptops, phones, and tablets. In our current environment, this is a very difficult task. To help us have the most focused learning experience possible, laptops and other technology will not be allowed during in-person class attendance and please remember to turn cell-phones off before the start of each class session. On days you are attending virtually, please limit your distractions by closing other applications on your computer in advance, turning off notifications, and leaving your phone/tablets/etc. somewhere out of eye sight.

Late Work.

Late work puts an unnecessary burden on the graders of your assignments and as a result, is subject to a penalty. An assignment submitted one day late is subject to a 5% penalty; two days late is a 10% penalty; three days late is a 15% penalty. Work will not be accepted after three days from its due date and extenuating circumstances should be discussed with Prof. Anoll or the TA directly.

Students with Disabilities.

If you need course accommodations due to a disability, please make an appointment with Prof. Anoll or the TA. We will work together along with the University's EAD Department to meet your needs: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student-access/>

The Stuff of Life.

Inevitably, things come up during the semester that can make it challenging for some students to follow the policies outlined above. If at any point, you are struggling to fulfill your expectations in this course, please come talk to Prof. Anoll or the TA. The earlier you do this, the easier it is to find a solution for the challenge. Further, here is a list of resources that can help:

- Title IX and Student Discrimination Office: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/>
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Life resources: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lgbtqi/resources>
- For students dealing with harassment, assault, and/or stalking, Vanderbilt Project Safe has resources (<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe/>).
- For students dealing with anxiety, depression, distress, or other concerns, the University Counseling Center (615) 322-2571 offers resources: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/ucc/>
- To go to the intake form to be scheduled with a counseling professional: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?VanderbiltUniv&layout_id=20www.vanderbilt.edu/studentcarenetwork

Assignments and Course Requirements

The assignments in this course are designed to assess your content acquisition and retention, your analytical growth, and your ability to apply the course materials to real-world political behaviors. As such, there are three categories of assignments that count towards your final grade:

Content Acquisition: Concept Maps. 52%

Near the conclusion of Unit 1, 2, and 3 you are required to develop and bring to class a concept map for the unit. These concept maps can be organized in many ways (we'll discuss examples in class) but all maps should a) highlight key ideas and questions from the unit and b) connect these concepts by highlighting where ideas challenge or complement each other. These maps will contribute increasingly to your grade as the semester progresses, reflecting the idea that I intend for you to get better at making them as the course goes on: Unit 1 map = 10%; Unit 2 map = 12%; Unit 3 map = 14%. You will also be asked to create a concept map as the course's final exam = 16% A rubric and more details are available in the assignments folder on Brightspace.

Analytical Growth & Application: Participatory Act Project. 48%

Our course material is designed not only to expose you to core themes and evidence in the study of American political participation and representation; it is also designed to give you opportunities to analyze these concepts and apply them in your life. As a result, our second category of assignments will revolve around you completing a political participatory act on a current issue that interests you by the end of the semester. Participatory acts may include writing a congressperson, volunteering for a political campaign, registering others (or yourself) to vote, organizing a deliberative event, attending a city council or town hall meeting, designing or supporting a petition effort, or writing an opinion editorial. Alternative participatory acts are welcome, but should be approved in office hours. This final project is broken into three components parts, each designed to help you apply our ideas from class your specific project:

- Part 1: What do I need to know to engage effectively as a member of the polity? 14%
- Part 2: How can I be represented? 16%
- Part 3: Should I engage? What is my plan moving forward? 18%

More details on this assignment are available on Brightspace.

Course Schedule and Readings

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
Unit 1: How capable is the demos?			
In this unit, we will explore a question foundational to the rest of our studies – to what extent are humans capable of fulfilling their role as citizens in a democratic government?			
<i>Week 1</i> 1/26	Course Intro	- None	
1/28	Unit Intro: Democracy's Demands	- Delli Carpini & Keeter, 23pg	
<i>Week 2</i> 2/2	Citizen Knowledge	- Delli Carpini & Keeter, 4pg + Table 2.2 – 2.7 - Hutchings & Piston, 2pg - Perez, 9pg	
2/4	Heuristics	- Popkin, 18pg - Harris, 2pg - Kuklinski & Quirk, 20pg	

<i>Week 3</i> 2/9	Issue Publics	- Krosnick, 7pg - Pew Research, 4pg	
2/11	Thick Citizenship	- Carretero, Haste, & Bermudez, 4pg - Ackerman & Fishkin, 19pg - Deveaux, 2pg	
<i>Week 4</i> 2/16	Application: Ballot Initiatives	- Miller, 11pg - Tolbert & Smith, 16pg - Adams, 10pg	
2/18	Unit Review	- None	Concept Map 1
<p>Unit 2: Who is represented in a representative democracy? In this unit, we will consider how various participatory pathways are thought to shape political representation, whether they work as theorized, and where inequalities occur in outcomes.</p>			
<i>Week 5</i> 2/23	In-Class Reading Day	- None; In-class time to work on Act Project	
2/25	Unit Intro: Representation Defined	- Urbinati & Warren, 7pg - Edwards, 6pg - Lee & Oppenheimer, 12pg	
<i>Week 6</i> 3/2	Those Who Can Vote(?)	- Keyssar, 7pg - Mauer, 10pg - Clegg, 8pg - <u>Watch</u> John Oliver episode	Act Project I
3/4	Those Who Do Vote(?)	- Leighley & Nagler, 8pg + tables - Franko, 13pg - Anzia, 10pg	
<i>Week 7</i> 3/9	Those Who Pressure(?)	- Kollman, 5pg - Gillion, 13pg - Enos, Kaufman, Sands 9pg	
3/11	Those With a Seat at the Table(?)	- Mansbridge, 24pg - Butler & Broockman, 8pg - Smith, 5pg	
<i>Week 8</i> 3/16	Application: Panel of Experts	- None	

3/18	Unit Review	- None	Concept Map 2
Unit 3: Why do people participate in politics? Political participation is thought irrational by many scholars, but (some) Americans do it anyway. Why?			
<i>Week 9</i> 3/23	Unit Intro: A Paradox	- None	Act Project II
3/25	Because It's Low-Cost	- Gomez et al., 13pg - Brown, 9pg	
<i>Week 10</i> 3/30	Because They Think It Matters	- Brunk, 9pg - Groenendyk & Banks, 12pg	
4/1	For the Social Benefits	- Green, Gerber, Larimer, 6pg - McClendon, 10pg	
<i>Week 11</i> 4/6	For the Psychological Benefits	- Chong, 5pg - Anoll, 21pg	
4/8	In-Class Reading Day	- None; in-class time to work on assignments	
<i>Week 12</i> 4/13	Participatory Feedback Loop	- Soss, 29pg	Concept Map 3
4/15	Unit Review	- None	
Unit 4: What does this all mean... for me? In this final unit, we will reflect back over the contents of our course to think about how best to move forward – as a scholar and as a member of the polity.			
<i>Week 13</i> 4/20	Looking Back to Go Forward	- Hogan, 10pg	
4/22	Talking and Organizing	- Cohen et al, 8pg - Broockman & Kalla, 5pg	
<i>Week 14</i> 4/27	Choices, Choices	- Young, 18pg	Act Project III
4/29	A Final Note	- None	
Exam: Monday, May 3 at 3 PM			