

Course Syllabus

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PS 5320

Political Behavior

Fall 2025

08/25 – 12/13

Tuesdays and Thursdays - 2 PM - 3:20 PM

WT Brookshire Hall 137

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CAS 125

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Office Hours: T TR 12:30-1:50PM

Note - This syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Introduction

This course is about understanding why people think and act the way they do in politics. At its core, political behavior asks some of the most important and personal questions in American democracy. Why do people vote or choose not to? Why do some align with political parties while others reject them? How do race, gender, religion, and class shape attitudes? Why does polarization feel so strong today, and what role do elites, the media, and culture play in keeping it alive?

We will approach these questions as lived realities that influence daily choices. Throughout the semester you will track how elites frame issues, reflect on films that dramatize power and protest, and map out your own political profile. The goal is to connect theories of political behavior to the real-world forces that influence how people make sense of politics.

This course is also about self-discovery. By the end, you should have a clearer sense of how your own political identity has been shaped by family, culture, media, and community. You will see how your experiences fit into larger patterns of American political behavior, and how ordinary citizens sustain or challenge democracy.

Together, we will build a classroom space that encourages questioning, reflection, and respectful debate. Expect to encounter ideas that challenge your assumptions and activities that push you to connect personal experience with political science research.

By the close of the semester you will not only know about political behavior but will understand it as something lived, contested, and evolving. You will carry forward a sharper sense of how politics runs through your own story.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. **Analyze patterns of political behavior** and explain how voting, partisanship, ideology, and participation are shaped by individual and group experiences.
2. **Connect theory to practice** by applying models of political behavior to contemporary issues and events.
3. **Evaluate the influence of elites and media** in shaping public opinion, agenda-setting, and partisan divides.
4. **Reflect on the role of identity in politics** by examining how race, gender, religion, culture, and class inform political choices and worldviews.
5. **Develop a personal political profile** that situates your own attitudes and experiences within larger trends in American political behavior.
6. **Practice critical inquiry and communication** through written reflections, in-class discussions, and research-based assignments that require you to weigh evidence, interrogate assumptions, and connect personal insights with political science research.
7. **Understand political behavior as lived and evolving**, recognizing how citizens sustain or challenge democracy through everyday choices, alignments, and forms of participation.

Course Information

Grade

Final Portfolio – 45%

Discussions – 15%

Film Character Analyses - 15%

Module Assignments - 25%

Grade Assignment

Below 60 = F

60 and less than 70 = D

70 and less than 80 = C

80 and less than 90 = B

90 and less than 100 = A

Accommodations

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class, or at my office. To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker or extended time on exams), students must also register with the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) (<https://www.uttTyler.edu/disabilityservices/>), **located at UC 3150 (903-566-7079)**. It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements.

Family Friendly Policy

Currently, the university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here is thus, a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff and faculty parents.

- All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary to support the breastfeeding relationship. Because not all women can pump sufficient milk, and not all babies will take a bottle reliably, I never want students to feel like they have to choose between feeding their baby and continuing their education. You and your nursing baby are welcome in class anytime.
- For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to choose between missing classes to stay home with a child and leaving him or her with someone you or the child does not feel comfortable with.

While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.

- I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.
- In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met. Non-parents in the class, please reserve seats near the door for your parenting classmates.

Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have *finally* gone to sleep. The struggles of balancing school, childcare and often another job are exhausting! I hope that you will feel comfortable disclosing your student-parent status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all student in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance. Thank you for the diversity you bring to our classroom!

(Cheyney, 2019)

Important Covid-19 Information for Classroom

Students are expected to wear face masks covering their nose and mouth in public settings (including classrooms and laboratories). The UT Tyler community of Patriots views adoption of these practices consistent with its [Honor Code \(Links to an external site.\)](https://www.uttyler.edu/center-for-ethics/)  (<https://www.uttyler.edu/center-for-ethics/>) and a sign of good citizenship and respectful care of fellow classmates, faculty, and staff.

Students who are feeling ill or experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, digestive issues (e.g. nausea, diarrhea), or a higher than normal temperature should stay at home and are encouraged to use the [UT Tyler COVID-19 Information and Procedures \(Links to an external site.\)](https://www.uttyler.edu/coronavirus/)  (<https://www.uttyler.edu/coronavirus/>) website to review protocols, check symptoms, and report possible exposure. Students needing additional accommodations may contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources at University Center 3150, or call (903) 566-7079 or email saroffice@uttyler.edu (<mailto:saroffice@uttyler.edu>).

Class Disruptions

Repeated talking, texting, or surfing the web on laptops is not acceptable in this class. These actions are distracting. Such disruptions harm the learning environment. Incidents of texting, talking, or surfing the web in class will result in a reduced attendance grade. If I see it, I may say nothing, but I am always watching. Just because I do not stop class to address you, does not mean your misconduct will go unpunished. Believe you me, it just ain't worth the hassle, you can Instagram after class.

Required Texts

- Michael S. Lewis-Beck ... [and others] ; with a foreword by Philip E. Converse. [The American Voter Revisited](https://www.amazon.com/American-Voter-Revisited-Michael-Lewis-Beck/dp/0472070401/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3S1UQPGN4CVXF&keywords=the+american+voter+revisited&qid=1672783783&s=books&prefix=tl1#detailBullets_feature_div) ↗. Ann Arbor :University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- DiMaggio, Anthony R. [Unequal America: Class Conflict, the News Media, and Ideology in an Era of Record Inequality](https://www.amazon.com/Unequal-America-Anthony-DiMaggio/dp/0367521121/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?asc_campaign=fddc9229cf312a98802caca3e484a955&asc_source=01HPSC557S3N9MA2MVJTEJ7DN5&t;20#detailBullets_feature_div) ↗. Routledge, 2020.

Schedule

See Canvas.

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. Students Rights and Responsibilities To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php> ↗ (<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>)

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php> ↗ (<http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>)

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more

information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free 
(<http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free>)

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. (For Fall, the Census Date is Sept. 12.) Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar> 
(<http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>). Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date (Sept. 12th) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid State-Mandated Course

Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date). Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of

modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler>  (<https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler>) and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.utt Tyler.edu/disabilityservices>  (<http://www.utt Tyler.edu/disabilityservices>), the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester. (Revised 05/17)

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

“Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student's test paper;

- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

“Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.

“Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu (<mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu>)
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu (<mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu>)
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Fri Nov 28, 2025	 Film Character Analysis #1 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012912)	due by 11:59pm
	 Film Character Analysis #2 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012913)	due by 11:59pm
	 Film Character Analysis #3 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012914)	due by 11:59pm
Thu Dec 4, 2025	 Final Portfolio Submission (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012915)	due by 11am
	 Political Origin Story Reflection (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012911)	
	 Evangelical Divide on Religion and Politics (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012902)	
	 Gender Differences in 2024 Vote Choice (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012904)	
	 How Elite Cues Shape Political Choices (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012916)	
	 How Trump won 42% of Latino voters in 2024 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012900)	
	 Low Stakes Activity - Bad News Game (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012907)	

Date	Details	Due
	 <u>Mapping Generation Effects on Political Behavior</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012917)	
	 <u>Media Critique and Political Discourse</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012908)	
	 <u>My Partisan Identification</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012910)	
	 <u>Public Opinion in Practice</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012918)	
	 <u>Race or Class Divides in America</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012903)	
	 <u>The Dangers of Partisan Brain...</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012909)	
	 <u>What's Your Take? - How Important Is a Free Press to Our Democracy? Is It Under Threat?</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012906)	
	 <u>What's Your Take? - How Social Media Divides Us</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012905)	
	 <u>White Identity Politics</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/48859/assignments/1012901)	