PSCI 490: The American Presidential Election --
Understanding the ‘Trump Phenomenon’
Fall 2016
HH 259, Wednesday 8:30-11:20

Instructor: Prof. Gerry Boychuk
Email Address: gboychuk@uwaterloo.ca
Office Location: Hagey Hall 316
Office Hours: Thursday, 9:30-11:00
or by appointment

Course Description:

Is some significant segment of the American voting population simply politically ‘deranged’? How else do we understand the 2016 US presidential election – especially the “Trump phenomenon.” Does Trump’s seemingly improbable political success reflect dynamics generated by the racial cast of American politics, popular anxieties caused by declining economic security, ‘cultural’ insecurities relating to religion or gender? To what degree does it reflect the tendency of the American political system toward what outside observers have referred to as ‘hyper-democracy’? To what degree does it reflect an ideological reaction against an ostensibly inevitable trend in the US towards greater statism? Is it a rational response on the part of segments of the electorate to increasing economic dislocation and insecurity based on material interests or is it an irrational response (at least in terms of economic interests) based on cultural and ideological wedge issues? Or...as stated at the outset, is some segment of the American voting public “politically deranged”?

Pre-Requisites: A minimum of 0.50 unit of PSCI; Level at least 4A

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students should:

- demonstrate an ability to understand, analyse, and critically assess book-length works written at a professional social science standard;
- demonstrate an ability to link elements of the 2016 presidential election contest to broader theories and interpretations of the primary forces shaping American politics;
- understand the formal debate structure and be able to effectively and comfortably participate and contribute to a team within that structure.
Texts:


Access to the New York Times is required for the course. (Full digital access is currently available for students at the student rate of $12 (US) for twelve weeks.)

Course Requirements, Expectations, and Standards:

Overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Type</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written Assignments</strong></td>
<td>Debate Overview Paper</td>
<td>Friday, December 9th, 11:59 pm</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>online</td>
<td>online prior to assigned debate</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Participation</td>
<td>Seminar Participation (book discussion segment of course)</td>
<td>Sept. 28, Oct. 5, 19, 26</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debate Team Participation</td>
<td>on assigned debate date</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminar Participation (debate segment of course)</td>
<td>all other unassigned debate dates (of Nov. 9, 16, 23, 30)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Written Assignments:

The two written assignments for the course will be based on seminar debates. There will be four formal debates over the course of the term each of which will involve two teams of three students each with the remaining students comprising the audience. Students will be assigned to their debate topic/team on September 22nd.
All written assignments must provide a full list of sources used and avoid plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity. The preferred citation style is the Chicago author-date style which used author-date citations in the text and a bibliography at the end (see Library https://library.osu.edu/find/resources/citation-examples/chicago-author-date/). In this style, footnotes or endnotes are used only for explanatory digressions or notes of clarification.

**Debate Position Papers (35%)**

Each student participating in the debate on a given week will submit before class a short (3500 word max) debate position paper adopting the position in the debate to which the student (and their team) has been assigned for the debate.

There are **NO** restrictions on team work or multiple submission for the debate position papers. While students are allowed to submit individual papers, they are encouraged to submit team papers (although each student must submit an identical copy of the paper on Learn for marking purposes.)

Papers are due on Learn before the tutorial to which the student is assigned for debate. There are no late provisions for debate position papers. Position papers submitted after the debate has taken place will be awarded a grade of 0%.

**Debate Overview Papers (35%)**

Students will be expected to write a short debate overview paper (3500 word max) on one of the debates (in which they are not participating) outlining which side of the debate as presented in class the student found most compelling. The paper is expected to demonstrate a good understanding of the assigned book for that debate, summarize the central points in the written submissions by each team, and provide an overview of the main themes in the oral segment of the debate.

Attendance at the tutorial debates is required to appropriate complete this assignment (i.e. providing an overview of the date). Students unable to attend a debate will be required to complete the assignment on another seminar debate. Papers submitted by students who did not attend the debate will not be graded.

All assignments are due on Learn by 11:59 pm on Friday, December 9th. All late assignments will be penalized 5% per day (including weekends).

**General Seminar Participation (10%)**

Each seminar will be comprised of two segments. The first will discuss developments in the election campaign and assigned articles readings (which will be posted each week on Learn.) The second segment will be devoted to discussing the assigned books (first half of course) and debating a central question relating to the assigned (second half of course.)

General seminar participation on the four book discussion weeks will be assessed roughly equally divided between making oral contributions in the seminar and the quality of those contributions (e.g. the degree to which they demonstrate a familiarity with the books under discussion.) These grades
will not be waived for absence except with appropriate medical/emergency documentation including notification of the instructor in advance of the seminar date.

**Debate Team Participation (10%)**

Debate team participation grades will be assessed for students participating in their assigned debate and will be roughly divided between making oral contributions in the debate (beyond their initial presentation) and the quality of those contributions (especially with regard to demonstrating that the student has done the required preparatory work.) These grades will not be waived for absence except with appropriate medical/emergency documentation including notification of the instructor in advance of the assigned debate date.

**General Debate Participation (10%)**

General seminar participation grades (e.g. in debate sessions for which a student is not assigned to a debate team) will be assessed roughly equally divided between making oral contributions in the seminar and the quality of those contributions (e.g. familiarity with the arguments from the book being debated.) These grades will not be waived for absence except with appropriate medical/emergency documentation including notification of the instructor in advance of the seminar date.

**Extension Policy for Written Assignments**

All requests for assignment extensions must be completed in writing (e.g. email) and be received before the due date. Extensions will only be granted in the event of an officially documented extenuating circumstance (that is, serious personal illness, critical personal or family crisis, etc.). If a situation arises that may prevent you from completing an assignment on time, contact instructor as early as possible and, without exception, before the assignment is due.

There are no extension provision for the debate position paper or participating in the assigned seminar debate. Officially documented extenuating circumstances that result in a students inability to complete the debate position paper or participate in their assigned debate will result in the other components of the course being re-weighted appropriately.

The UW Verification of Illness Form can be found at: Health Services
[www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html)
LECTURE/SEMINAR SCHEDULE:

Week 1 (Sept. 14)  Introduction

Week 2 (Sept. 21)  A Primer: Peculiarities of the Presidential Election Process


Week 3 (Sept. 28)  Book Discussion 1

Article Reading:  TBA


Week 4 (Oct. 5)  Book Discussion 2

Article Reading:  TBA


Week 5 (Oct. 14)  Working Groups

Article Reading:  TBA

Week 6 (Oct. 19)  Book Discussion 3

Article Reading:  TBA


Week 7 (Oct. 26)  Book Discussion 4

Article Reading:  TBA
Week 8 (Nov. 2) Working Groups

Article Reading: TBA

Week 9 (Nov. 9) Debate 1: American ‘Hyper-Democracy’

Article Reading: TBA


Proposition: “The [American] system is too democratic...” with the result that it is “...harder than it would otherwise be for the American system as a whole to deal with some of America’s most pressing problems.” (King, 1997: 3-4) The conduct of and outcome of the 2016 presidential primary and general presidential elections support the claim that the American “system is too democratic and ought to be made less so.”

Week 10 (Nov. 16) Economic Interests versus Political ‘Derangement’

Article Reading: TBA


Tentative Proposition: Frank argues that ‘cultural’ wedge issues can be used to entice voters to vote against their own economic interests – a condition which he characterizes as a form of political ‘derangement.’ As evident in the 2016 presidential election, the Trump phenomenon represents a form of ‘political derangement’ as defined by Frank.

Week 11 (Nov. 23) Race in American Politics

Article Reading: TBA

Tentative Proposition: Tesler argues that, over the course of Obama’s presidency, that “...racially liberal and racially conservative Americans were more divided...than they had been in modern times.” (206) While Tesler notes that “the influence of racial attitudes and race on mass political decisions making [may] quickly return to its pre-Obama level,” it is “more likely” that the “growing racialization of mass politics...could have electoral consequences...long after Barack Obama leaves the White House.” (206) The 2016 presidential election suggests a continuation of expanding (rather than declining) racialization of mass politics in the post-Obama era.

Week 12 (Nov. 30) Debate 4: Social Democratic America?

Article Reading: TBA


Tentative Proposition: “America’s future is a social democratic one.” (Kenworthy, 2014: 8) The conduct of and outcome of the 2016 presidential primary and general elections support this claim.
University Regulations:

Academic Integrity

*Academic Integrity:* In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

*Discipline:* A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

*Grievance:* A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

*Appeals:* A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

*Note for students with disabilities:* The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.