

Political Science 3336F 001: Elections and Voting

Fall 2026

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Office Hours: Thursdays from 12:00–2:15 PM or by appointment

Objectives

Though democracy is much more than a series of elections, it remains true that in the contemporary era, voting and elections remain central to democratic representation, accountability, and legitimacy. Moreover, electoral outcomes can produce profound consequences for a country, groups within a country, or even the world at large. This makes elections, and the voters whose individual choices collectively decide elections, worthy of careful examination. Why do citizens vote or abstain? How do social identities, partisan attachments, ideology, economic evaluations, campaigns, and media shape vote choice? How do electoral systems structure party competition and representation? How do elections operate differently across democratic, subnational, second-order, and non-democratic contexts? In this course, we survey the role of elections in maintaining democratic governance from theoretical and empirical perspectives. Topics to be covered include: varieties of electoral systems; the legal framework governing election campaigns; the role of parties and the media in election campaigns; and major social, psychological and economic influences on voting behaviour. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Explain major concepts and theories used to study elections, representation, accountability, and voter behaviour.
- 2) Compare how electoral systems, institutional rules, and context shapes party competition, representation, and electoral outcomes.
- 3) Analyze major psychological, social, economic, and political influences on voting behaviour.
- 4) Evaluate how parties, candidates, campaigns, media, and electoral integrity shape democratic and non-democratic elections.

Prerequisite(s)

Political Science 2230E, 2234E, 2244E, 2530F/G, or 2544F/G

Unless you have met the prerequisite(s) for this course or obtained written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Non-Medical and Medical Accommodations

Accommodations for absences from the midterm or final exam, missed opportunities to complete the weekly discussion question responses, and late online submissions will be offered in accordance with the university's current [Policy on Academic Consideration](#). Barring an emergency, absences should be submitted in advance through the Student Absence Portal. More detail on academic considerations can be found through the [Office of the Registrar](#).

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the Wellness and Wellbeing website <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

For the full list of Student Support Services, students are encouraged to take advantage of the following link: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/case-management/index.html>.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken very seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy—specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence—at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences_26SEP.pdf.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course you are allowed to use AI to help you understand passages in assigned readings, to assist you with studying for exams, to provide potential sources for relevant assignments, and to suggest areas where your written submissions might be improved. However, you must not use AI as a substitute for reading assigned texts, as a means of writing or directly editing your work, as a replacement for coming to class, or for other uses not authorized above. Moreover, you will be held responsible for any inadvertent plagiarism caused by the misuse of AI, and reliance on false citations will be considered an academic offense.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves reliance on the work of another author without attribution. Students must compose their own essays and assignments, in their own words. Whenever students incorporate an idea, or a passage, or data from another author, they must fully acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by properly citing the borrowed material.

Plagiarism can be direct, involving straightforward copying of an author's work without providing both attribution and quotation marks. It can be less direct, involving lightly paraphrasing an author's work, rearranging their sentences while maintaining the same general structure and meaning, or stitching together material from two or more sources — these would count as plagiarism even with the source or sources identified, as they rely too heavily upon the way the author or authors chose to present their ideas. Take note that students may satisfactorily write up an author's ideas in their own words, but then neglect to cite the source or sources of the ideas, which also counts as plagiarism. And students may plagiarize themselves by submitting work they have previously submitted in other courses.

Plagiarism is a major academic offence, one which is taken seriously at Western. See the Scholastic Offence Policy (above) and Procedures in the Western Academic Calendar for more detail: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf.

Plagiarism Checking: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Multiple-choice tests/exams: Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Security and Confidentiality of Student Work

"Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

Duplication of Work

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

Grading and Grade Adjustments

The Department of Political Science has a policy that undergraduate final course grades will only be rounded to the next whole grade if they end at 0.5 or higher; otherwise, they will be rounded down. No grades will be re-assessed up without a clear and accepted statement of reasons to re-evaluate a specific graded assignment.

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines. Students registered in Social Science should refer to <https://www.advising.ssc.uwo.ca/index.html> for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

Accessibility at Western: Please contact accessibility@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you. You can also visit <https://accessibility.uwo.ca/index.html>.

Course Format and Requirements

We will meet in person each week unless otherwise specified. Class meetings will consist of a combination of lecture and question/discussion portions. All assigned readings will be made available on the OWL site under the Course Readings tab. Reading the assigned material before class and being prepared to engage with this material is also required for you to succeed in this course. Note-taking materials are encouraged, and the use of electronic devices should be limited to note-taking and other class-related activities. Disruptive use of these devices is prohibited.

Course Evaluation Description

1) Weekly discussion questions

a) Online submissions: 10%

- i) Before ten class sessions, each student will formulate two discussion questions related to one or more of the assigned readings. Discussion questions must be submitted to the online portal under the Assignments tab on our course page. Due the day before class by 11:55 PM.
- ii) For example, you might further consider a concept, puzzle, or methodological choice contained within one of the readings. You might also consider how two or more readings are related, and what points of contention emerge between different sets of authors, if any.

b) In-class responses: 10%

- i) At the start of ten class sessions, students will respond to two discussion questions related to one or more of the assigned readings. Discussion questions will be based on or directly borrowed from on-time submissions.
- ii) Responses are graded by completion rather than accuracy. Responses that do not attempt to answer the discussion question will be marked as incomplete, e.g., your entire response to a question is “not sure.”

2) Examinations

a) Midterm exam: 25%

- i) On October 29, we will meet at our usual time and place for a one-hour exam. The exam will consist of two parts: a 50-question multiple choice section and a short answer section. For the short answer section, students will be asked to respond to two of five given questions.
- ii) 60 percent of your midterm exam grade will be determined by the multiple choice section. The remaining 40 percent of your midterm exam grade will be determined by the short answer section.

b) Final exam: 25%

- i) At a time and date to be determined by the registrar’s office, we will meet for a two-hour exam. This exam will be focused primarily on material covered in the second half of the course. The exam will consist of two parts: a 60-question multiple choice section and a short answer section. For the short answer section, students will be asked to respond to three of five given questions.
- ii) 50 percent of your final exam grade will be determined by the multiple choice section. The remaining 50 percent of your final exam grade will be determined by the short answer section.

3) Election profile

a) Paper outline: 5%

- i) Each student will submit a 1–2 page outline for a 7–8 page double-spaced essay about a noteworthy national election that was decided during this century. Examples of a noteworthy election include an election with a surprising result, with atypical rules, or with an unique historical context. Students are encouraged to select an election held outside North America.
- ii) Outlines may be in prose or bullet point format. Statements not directly supported by course materials should be supported by reputable external sources. A minimum of eight external sources is required. Sources should be provided in APA format.
- iii) Each outline must supply brief answers to the following questions:
 - (1) What makes the selected election noteworthy?
 - (2) What were the immediate outcomes of the election?
 - (3) What were or have been key secondary outcomes of the election?
 - (4) Who were the major candidates and what were the most important aspects of their respective platforms?
 - (5) How did these platforms contribute to the victory of the winning candidate OR the loss of the runner-up?
 - (6) What important social, economic, political, legal, and institutional factors influenced the election's outcome, if any?
- iv) The assignment deadline is November 5, 2026. Outlines must be submitted to the online portal under the Assignments tab on our course page. Late outlines will receive a daily penalty of 10 percentage points.

b) Rough draft: 5%

- i) Each student will submit a 7–8 page double-spaced essay with one-inch margins and a typical text font and size, e.g., 12-pt Times New Roman. This essay will expand upon your outline by offering full responses to the questions provided above. It should be formatted as follows:
 - (1) A one-page introduction identifying the election you have chosen, the immediate outcomes of your chosen election, and the factor(s) that makes your chosen election noteworthy.
 - (2) A 1–2 page section describing the major candidates and the most important aspects of their respective platforms.
 - (3) At least one page iterating how the major candidates' platforms contributed to the victory of the winning candidate OR the loss of the runner-up.
 - (4) A 2–3 page section describing the most important social, economic, political, legal, and institutional factors that influenced the election's outcome.

- (5) A one-page conclusion that briefly expresses necessary caveats, discusses alternative explanations for the election's outcome, and describes the consequences that this election has led to for the country in which it was held.
 - ii) At all times, students are encouraged to consider *how* you can demonstrate that the assertions you are making are true. For example, you might supply empirical evidence that supports your claim or walk your hypothetical reader through a counterfactual, i.e., what would have happened to Y if X had happened differently (or not at all)? Supporting claims is especially important when satisfying qualifiers like "most important" or arguing that a single policy promise contributed to a politician's electoral victory/loss.
 - iii) In addition to at least eight reputable external sources, your essay should contain meaningful references to the course material. For example, when considering the institutional factors that influenced the election's outcome, you might reference the importance of proportional representation versus simple member plurality and cite the appropriate course readings. All citations should be in APA format.
 - iv) The assignment deadline is November 19, 2026. Rough drafts must be submitted to the online portal under the Assignments tab on our course page. Late drafts will not be accepted.
- c) Final draft: 20%
- i) Each student will submit a revised 7–8 page double-spaced essay with one-inch margins and a typical text font and size, e.g., 12-pt Times New Roman. This essay will include your final responses to the questions first answered in your outlines. In addition to at least eight reputable external sources, your essay should contain meaningful references to the course material. All citations should be in APA format.
 - ii) The assignment deadline is December 3, 2026. Final drafts must be submitted to the online portal under the Assignments tab on our course page. Late drafts will be penalized by 4 percentage points each day.

Course Meetings and Assigned Readings

Week One: Introduction (Why Elections Matter)

No readings assigned this week.

Week Two: Elections, Representation and Political Accountability

Manin, Bernard, Adam Przeworski, and Susan C. Stokes. 1999. "Elections and Representation." In *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, edited by Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139175104.002>

Mansbridge, Jane. 2011. "Clarifying the Concept of Representation." *American Political Science Review* 105(3): 621–630. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000189>

Kayser, Mark Andreas, and Michael Peress. 2012. "Benchmarking across Borders: Electoral Accountability and the Necessity of Comparison." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 661–684. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000275>

Week Three: Electoral Systems, Rules, and Competition

Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Pages 3–34 only.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174954>

Carey, John M., and Simon Hix. 2011. "The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 383–397.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2010.00495.x>

Grofman, Bernard. 2016. "Perspectives on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems." *American Review of Political Science* 19: 523–540.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-042214-044344>

Week Four: Voter Turnout and Political Participation

Plutzer, Eric. 2002. "Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood." *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 41–56.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055402004227>

Lijphart, Arend. 1997. "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma." *American Political Science Review* 91(1): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952255>

Blais, André. 2006. "What Affects Voter Turnout?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 111–125. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.070204.105121>

Kostelka, Filip, and André Blais. 2021. "The Generational and Institutional Sources of the Global Decline in Voter Turnout." *World Politics* 73(4): 629–667.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887121000149>

Week Five: Models of Voter Behaviour

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper. Pages 36–50, 207–217, 238–246, and 266–271 only.

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York, NY: Wiley. Pages 24–37 and 120–136 only.

Bartels, Larry M. 2010. "The Study of Electoral Behavior." In *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, edited by Jan E. Leighley. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Pages 1–22 only.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235476.003.0001>

Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. 1997. "Voting Correctly." *American Political Science Review* 91(3): 585–598. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952076>

Week Six: Reading Week

No readings assigned this week.

Week Seven: Party Identification, Ideology, and Social Cleavages

Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Stein Rokkan. 1967. "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction." In *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Johnston, Richard. 2006. "Party Identification: Unmoved Mover or Sum of Preferences?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 329–351.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.062404.170523>

Cochrane, Christopher. 2010. "Left/Right Ideology and Canadian Politics." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43(3): 583–605. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423910000624>

Week Eight: Midterm Exam

No readings assigned this week.

Week Nine: Negative Voting, Strategic Voting, and Affective Polarization

Caruana, Nicholas J., R. Michael McGregor, and Laura B. Stephenson. 2015. "The Power of the Dark Side: Negative Partisanship and Political Behaviour in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 48(4): 771–789. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423915000880>

Blais, André, Richard Nadeau, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. 2001. "Measuring Strategic Voting in Multiparty Plurality Elections." *Electoral Studies* 20(3): 343–352.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-3794\(00\)00017-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-3794(00)00017-2)

Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-073034>

Week Ten: Models of Party Behaviour

Grofman, Bernard. 2004. "Downs and Two-Party Convergence." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7: 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.7.012003.104711>

Strøm, Kaare. 1990. "A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties." *American Journal of Political Science* 34(2): 565–598. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111461>

Meguid, Bonnie M. 2005. Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 347–359. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055405051701>

Rovny, Jan. 2013. "Where Do Radical Right Parties Stand? Position Blurring in Multidimensional Competition." *European Political Science Review* 5(1): 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773911000282>

Week Eleven: Candidates, Campaigns, Mobilization, and Media

Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. 2018. "The Minimal Persuasive Effects of Campaign Contact in General Elections: Evidence from 49 Field Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 112(1): 148–166. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055417000363>

Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman, and Ivy Brown Rovner. 2007. "The Effects of Negative Political Campaigns: A Meta-Analytic Reassessment." *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 1176–1209. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00618.x>

Levandusky, Matthew S. 2012. "Why Do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers?" *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3): 611–623. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12008>

Persily, Nathaniel. 2017. "Can Democracy Survive the Internet?" *Journal of Democracy* 28(2): 63–76. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0025>

Week Twelve: Voting in Second-Order Elections

Reif, Karlheinz, and Hermann Schmitt. 1980. "Nine Second-Order National Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results." *European Journal of Political Research* 8(1): 3–44.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1980.tb00737.x>

Bechtel, Michael M. 2012. "Not Always Second Order: Subnational Elections, National-Level Vote Intentions, and Volatility Spillovers in a Multi-Level Electoral System." *Electoral Studies* 31(1): 170–183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2011.10.005>

Cutler, Fred. 2008. "One Voter, Two First-Order Elections?" *Electoral Studies* 27(3): 492–504.
doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2008.01.002. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2008.01.002>

Week Thirteen: Election Integrity and Elections in Non-Democracies

Norris, Pippa. 2014. *Why Electoral Integrity Matters*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Pages 1–28 only. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107280861>

Schedler, Andreas. 2002. "Elections Without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 36–50. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0031>

Gandhi, Jennifer, and Ellen Lust. 2009. "Elections under Authoritarianism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 403–422. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060106.095434>

Week Fourteen: Final Exam Review

No readings assigned this week.