

Vote Smart!
FYS 040/041
Dr. Rachel Paine Caufield

Fall 2020
Mondays/Wednesdays 12:30-1:45pm Online (WWW)
CRN 9949

Contact Information:

I am very accessible to students. Here's how to reach me:

Office: Meredith Hall 211

Office Phone: (515) 271-1924

Cell Phone: (515) 710-3745

Email address: rachel.caufield@drake.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays 5:00-7:00pm; Thursdays 10:00am-12:00pm; Fridays 12:00-2:00pm
Please make appointments and we can meet via Zoom; weather-permitting, I will come to campus for outdoor meetings every other Friday

Course Overview:

The United States holds more elections than any other nation on earth. There are several reasons for this, but two stand out as particularly important. First, the division of authority between the national, state, and local governments (the system of American federalism) requires each level of government to organize separate elections to fill positions in the government. Second, Americans *love* elections. Therefore, even the most mundane government office is often subject to an election. There are places in America that elect judges and prosecutors, coroners, sheriffs, city managers, school boards, zoning boards, and some jurisdictions elect dogcatchers. Michigan elects a “drain commissioner.” In Massachusetts, Vermont, and Nebraska, citizens elect a “fence viewer,” who has the responsibility of resolving disputes regarding... you guessed it... fences.

We may love elections, but when it comes time to vote, we often fall down on the job. In 2016, 137.5 million Americans went to the polls. That's just 61.4% of the eligible adult voting population. Among young voters, age 18-29, just 46.1% voted. And that's a presidential election – turnout is significantly lower in midterm and special elections. Why do people simply opt out of elections? There are myriad reasons. Even for those who do go to the polls, many complain that they don't feel equipped to make difficult decisions about who will represent them. And in an era defined by mistrust of media institutions, “fake news,” and ideological “echo chambers,” one survey found that just 12% of likely voters expressed confidence that most Americans are informed voters – fully 76% believed that American voters do not possess adequate information.

If, as the Declaration of Independence states, government derives its authority from the “consent of the governed,” then understanding how citizens can participate, and finding ways to become an informed citizen capable of meaningful participation, becomes an essential part of sustaining and maintaining a vibrant democratic system of government. Throughout the semester, we will examine the ways that citizens can gather and use information to participate in government decisions. Voting is by far the most widely recognized means of participation, though not the only one. Therefore, we will seek to expand the scope of inquiry to understand how information can be used in the voting booth as well as to influence government in other ways.

Certainly, our current climate offers more than enough information on any topic we might find vaguely interesting. The challenge of our contemporary information environment is finding effective ways to distill and refine our understandings through careful evaluation of facts. Vote Smart is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to providing reliable, factual, nonpartisan information for voters. The idea is simple enough – compile the best information about candidates and elected officials in one place and make it widely available for all Americans to use for free. Vote Smart takes no money from special interests, and is strictly nonpartisan. No special interest agendas, no ideological “spin,” no “bubbles” no “echo chambers.”

Over the course of the semester, each of you will be interning with Vote Smart. It’s an opportunity to learn about issues, interest groups, elected officials, voting records, campaign finance, and position-taking alongside the professional staff of the organization. In class, we will also investigate the ways that you can use this information to become a more informed voter and a more active citizen. Your internship and class discussions will be supplemented with guest speakers and the opportunity to attend events. This gives you a chance to be face-to-face (even if virtually) with some of the people and groups that participate in the process – journalists, advocacy organizations, campaign staff, party leaders, candidates – while working to understand where information comes from and how it is used.

You may come to this class as someone with an extensive interest in and passion for politics. Or, you may come to this class as someone who has a deep distrust of government. Or, you may come to this class as someone whose family loves politics so much that you have tired of the whole affair. Or, you may come to this class as someone with little knowledge of the political process. Regardless of your current level of knowledge or interest, government decisions affect everyone – teachers, pharmacists, farmers, construction workers, wait staff, conservationists, physicians, insurance agents, financial planners, gardeners, chemists, flight attendants, realtors, zoologists, manufacturers, miners, hair stylists, journalists, movie producers, dog breeders, lawyers, counselors, architects, musicians, engineers, librarians, astronauts, coaches, firefighters, dancers, hunters, and computer scientists. Government decisions affect families, neighborhoods, religious and faith communities, hospitals, corporations, homeowners, schools, museums, kids, lakes, and forests. Whatever your background, whatever your career plans, whatever your personal circumstances, government is about you. The extent to which you choose to engage with government is your own decision – but knowing *how* to engage is an important skill. Having good information is a good first step.

We will begin the semester by examining our individual beliefs and information use. This will serve as a starting point to briefly examine political socialization and participation trends. Then, we’ll focus on the process of voting itself (How does one get ready vote? How can you register to vote? What sorts of documents do you need to vote? Where do you go to vote? How are votes recorded and counted?) and some of the more consequential theoretical points about voting (most notably, Is there a “right” to vote” in the United States? What does it mean to have a “right” to vote?).

As we head into the 2020 general election in November, you (as a group) will be responsible for conceptualizing, creating, and disseminating a voter guide for Drake students. Though there are countless examples of “voter guides,” I’m going to ask you to focus on those aspects of voting that you think are most confusing or mystifying to people *like you*, college students and other 18-21 year olds participating in their first presidential election. While you can guess at the kinds of questions they have, the kinds of information they have (or don’t have) and the kinds of things they want to know, you will likely find it most helpful to reach out and talk to *actual people*. As a group, you may decide to contact other FYS classes and see if you can talk to them, or you may want to put together some kind of online survey for Drake students, or you may want to visit with your Vote Smart supervisor to find out what

questions they are asked most frequently. All of this is to say that while we will work together as a group, I hope that you will not view our class as its own bubble, but will see it as an opportunity to get to know your peers and your community.

Following the election, we will examine the results, with particular attention on (1) how voting is perceived and represented in the media, and (2) who voted and what the results tell us about how they voted. We will also examine what was unique about the 2020 election cycle and what was not.

Along the way, we will pay close attention to the various interpretive lenses we use to understand what we are seeing – media tropes, advertising, social media algorithms, and confirmation bias – and how they may shape our understanding of individual interests as well as the public good. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Understand the ways in which voters engage in political action, including how citizens can best evaluate the candidates and parties to make informed voting choices.
- Assess how our understandings are shaped by factual information working alongside interpretive frameworks to “make meaning” in various ways
- Be aware of your own ideological commitments and respectfully interact with others who hold different beliefs
- Knowledgeably interpret and present factual material to convey information to a general audience
- Know how to find accurate and reliable information about candidates and feel confident making your decision about which candidates to support.

A word about political/ideological disagreement:

As is always the case in a class about politics (and during a contested election cycle), there is no way to avoid allowing personal opinions in the classroom. Ideally, I would like us to collectively recognize that political disagreement does not need to be personal disagreement. We should be able to disagree without being disagreeable. I encourage debate, but I want to ensure that debate does not devolve into insults, abuse, condescension, or disrespect. In addition, I will continually encourage you to step out of your own political beliefs to seek analytical understanding – and this skill is very important to the work that you do at Vote Smart. Most simply, this means that we remain respectful of others’ perspectives and appreciate that smart people often come to different conclusions – just because someone disagrees with you does not mean that they are not smart or not worthy of your full respect. This general approach to politics may not be well represented on our TV screens, in our Twitter feeds, or at campaign events, but it is essential to a productive classroom environment. For those who are particularly interested in the capacity to engage alternative viewpoints, I have appreciated work by scholar Julia Galef on the traits of being a “scout” rather than a “soldier” – being open to and intrigued by new ideas, questioning your own assumptions, and remaining curious (you can Google her new book or her various blog writing, or watch [her TEDx talk](#)).

A word about class format and expectations:

Unfortunately, the current global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic creates a very strange set of circumstances for the Fall 2020 semester. We will meet as a class on Zoom (you can access our class meetings through Blackboard, and all assignments will be submitted via Blackboard). This is not an ideal learning environment, but I am confident that we can collectively establish norms and conventions for our online class meetings that will promote a collaborative, productive, and energizing

experience for all of us. I anticipate and expect that you will actively join these meetings, participate in class conversations and groupwork, that you will ask questions as they arise and remain attentive to others' contributions.

- Whenever possible, I hope that you will turn your video on so that the class can see you, just as you can see me and your peers. This may mean that you have to brush your hair and change clothes before class – but that's a good idea under any circumstances!
- While we hold class meetings, please work to find a quiet location where you can focus on the class with very few distractions.
- In every situation (class discussion, guest speakers, etc), take notes and pay particular attention to questions as they come to you.
- Refrain from unnecessary or unproductive private chats during class – either through the Zoom chat function or other mediums (texting, Facebook, and so on). I know it can be easy to “multitask” by visiting websites or being on social media while in front of your screen, but research has demonstrated that [“multitasking” is detrimental](#) to any number of cognitive functions.
- Legally, the class meeting is my intellectual property. Unless I expressly permit it, you may not record, reproduce, or distribute any portion of our class meeting or work product.
- As I will discuss during our first class meeting, I highly recommend having some handy “emoticons” available during class so that you can signal to others when you are confused, supportive, happy, unsatisfied, etc. The only feedback options in Zoom are clapping hands and a thumbs up, so having a broader array of visual reactions will be helpful in creating a more interactive online class.
- If you have a question but are uncomfortable asking it during class, please make an appointment to speak with me (either during office hours or at some other time) and we can address your question privately.

Textbooks/Readings:

This class is heavily based on “experiential learning” – learning outside of the classroom and integrating your experience with the academic work that we do. As such, I have limited class readings, with the goal of choosing reading that will complement your internship. I firmly believe that the reading is necessary and helpful to create a cohesive class. Not only will you get more out of class meetings if you have completed the assigned reading, but you will be expected to integrate the reading material into your assignments. If you find that you have trouble with any of the reading, please feel free to come see me to go over it.

There is one textbook that I have assigned for this course, which is available at the bookstore and from online bookstores like Barnes and Noble and Amazon (should you choose to patronize them instead of the University bookstore).

Wehle, Kim. 2020. *What You Need to Know About Voting and Why*. HarperCollins Books.

I also recommend that all students keep up with the news by reading a daily newspaper, tuning in to television programs such as *The News Hour*, *This Week*, or *Meet the Press*, and radio programs like *Morning Edition* or *All Things Considered* (both on National Public Radio). In addition, there are many great podcasts that can help you digest the news in a conversational way. **Never rely on only one news source for all of your political information – find a diverse set of news sources that give you complete coverage of issues.** If you would like some suggestions, let me know.

I believe all students (and all citizens) have a responsibility to stay informed of political events. Although the course is principally about a broad analytical understanding of informed voting and political participation, knowledge of current events may help you to succeed in this class. Having said this, a strong knowledge of current events *alone* will not earn you high grades in the class. Current events will be used to illustrate the concepts of the class and can provide great practical examples, but you will also need to focus your attention on bigger theoretical concepts that can help us address systemic questions.

Attendance:

You are expected to attend class regularly and to be prepared for each class meeting – that means you have read the assigned reading prior to arriving in class and you are prepared to actively discuss the topic listed on the syllabus. I do not necessarily “require” attendance, although I will periodically take attendance and five percent of your final grade will be based on attendance *and participation*. If you are faced with an extreme situation that will require an extended absence from the class, please come see me.

Internship:

Each of you has been enrolled in FYS 040 *and* FYS 041. These are two separate but interrelated 3-credit courses. FYS 041 is the class. FYS 040 is a 3-credit internship with Vote Smart, a national nonpartisan organization headquartered at Drake that collects and disseminates reliable information about candidates and elected officials. Mackenzie Carlson, the Internship Coordinator at Vote Smart, will work with you to establish your work schedule and determine the department with which you will be working. If you have questions or concerns about the internship experience, several people are available to help you navigate the expectations of the work place – please feel free to reach out to me, or MacKenzie Carlson, and/or your PMACs Kathryn Lehmann (who completed an internship as a part of this course in 2018) and Samantha Byrnes.

Over the course of the semester, each of you should complete 120 hours of work with Vote Smart, and I will regularly be apprised of your progress toward that goal. In addition, you will have regular “check-in” points with your department supervisor after 2 weeks, after 5 weeks, and after 10 weeks, and supervisors will share their evaluations with me. This will form the basis for your final internship grade.

It is a rare thing to have an internship during your first semester in college – and I hope that you will use the experience as a chance to develop your professional skills and receive constructive criticism that can help you in other professional development settings (resume building, interviewing, communicating with professionals, working with colleagues, etc). Many of you will also have a chance to work with primary source documents (speeches, legislation, campaign finance documents, etc), which is an important skill set.

It is important to note that Vote Smart is a nonpartisan organization. While each of you possesses personal ideological beliefs and/or partisan affiliations that shape your view of the political world, Vote Smart is not the place to express those beliefs. Instead, your goal is to be an honest broker – making factual information available to the public. Training yourself to objectively interact with information is also a vital skill set, not just in politics and political debate, but in personal and professional relationships.

Grading:

To be clear about expectations, here is a summary of my grading standards:

An “A” grade is only given in cases where you have done exceptional work – meaning you have demonstrated an excellent understanding of the concepts, you have explained your reasoning effectively, and you have thoughtfully integrated ideas to produce a coherent and comprehensive analytical product. In the case of papers, an “A” grade will also indicate outstanding writing, i.e. precision of language, concise and effective discussion, excellent documentation using a well-established form of citation, and few (if any) errors in grammar and spelling. For your internship, an “A” grade is earned when you complete the required hours at the internship site, your supervisor reports that you have been productive and effective, and you have worked to integrate the internship experience with other classwork.

A “B” grade indicates good work. This means that you demonstrate superior understanding of the concepts, you put forward a good attempt at explaining your reasoning, and you have effectively used the relevant materials to produce a solid, though not outstanding, example of analytical thinking. For written assignments, a “B” indicates that you could do a better job of expressing your ideas in writing, but you have demonstrated a high level of thinking and analysis, you possess strong writing skills, you have documented your sources, and you have few (if any) errors in grammar and spelling. A “B” grade for the internship means that you have completed your required time commitment, but have not fully engaged the experience, either because your work is adequate but not impressive, or because you haven’t fully synthesized the work of the internship with other assignments and class discussion.

A “C” grade is given for average work. In other words, you do not misunderstand any of the concepts but you do not demonstrate a clear analytical focus or complete appreciation of the concepts that you use. In the case of written assignments, a “C” represents a paper that is not conceptually clear, or uses muddled reasoning. In terms of writing ability, a “C” indicates that your writing is acceptable, but uninspired, imprecise, and/or sometimes unclear. “C” papers also typically demonstrate a significantly higher number of spelling and/or grammar mistakes and/or a misunderstanding about how to cite information adequately or correctly. For the internship component, a “C” grade indicates that you have fallen short of expectations, but have made a good faith effort to complete the internship portion of the course. This will likely be a result of a combination of assessment metrics: (a) you have failed to complete the hours required, (b) your work performance is consistently below average, and/or (c) you have not made significant effort to connect the internship with your class experience.

A “D” grade is reserved for below-average work. “D” grades indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of the assignment or the concepts that are needed to address the question(s). In addition, a “D” grade often represents a failure to engage in theoretical, analytical thought (often this means that a student has instead opted to provide a normative discussion or relied heavily on intuitive explanations that are not based on class material or facts). For papers, a “D” grade represents a paper that is fundamentally flawed – meaning that the writing or the reasoning is poorly executed. Typically “D” papers include many common spelling and grammatical mistakes, use sloppy or careless citation/documentation, and do not fully engage the question at hand. A “D” grade on the internship component reflects poor attendance and significant departure from the required time commitment, poor performance (lazy or incomplete work), or a failure to connect the internship experience with the larger themes of the course.

An “F” is very poor and/or unacceptable work. If you fail an assignment, it demonstrates very significant misunderstanding of the concepts or a failure to answer the question(s) presented. For papers, “F” papers either (a) do not address the assignment; (b) are so poorly written so as to significantly impede the reader’s understanding of your discussion; (c) use no class materials or concepts to answer the question; or (d) are plagiarized (in whole or in part) or make no effort to cite information. An “F” for the internship is reserved for those cases where as student simply does not complete the required work, either because they skip work or because they don’t follow through with professional tasks. **You should come talk to me if you receive a failing grade on any assignment.**

In order to pass this course, you must complete ALL course requirements (i.e., if you fail to complete and turn in any one assignment by the last day of the semester (Friday December 11, 2020), you will fail the course). There will be no extra credit offered.

Only in extreme circumstances will extensions for written-assignments be granted. If you would like to request an extension, you need to do so at least 24 hours prior to the due date. If you fail to complete and turn in any written assignment by 5:00pm on the date that it is due, you will lose 5 points for each day that it is late (including weekend days). You must turn in all coursework to me via Blackboard, where it will be reviewed through SafeAssign, a software that checks for plagiarism. **All assignments must be completed specifically for this course and academic integrity guidelines will be strictly enforced (i.e. plagiarism and other breaches of academic integrity will result in a failing grade for the course – no questions asked).**

Should you require any testing or class accommodations due to learning disabilities or other circumstances, I will be happy to make those accommodations. I will need to see proper documentation within the first two weeks of the semester. Should you feel ill or exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19 during the semester, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can (a) work to ensure the safety of your peers and professors and (b) devise a plan that will allow you to take care of yourself, responsibly respond to the situation, and complete your coursework.

Written assignments:

Political Information Biography (approximately 4 pages)	15%
Voter Guide (completed with a group; based on peer grading)	30%
Analysis and Reflection of Site Visits/Events (4 papers, 1-2 pages each)	20%
Short Voting Analysis (1-2 pages)	5%
Post-election Analysis paper (approximately 4 pages)	15%
Attendance and Participation	15%

Political Information Biography (approximately 4 pages)

All of us encounter politics in a wide variety of settings, and some of us actively seek out news and information about politics and government. Even if you have only a passing interest in or awareness of current events, you have developed patterns of receiving and assessing information – sometimes these are conscious decisions but they may also be subconscious processes of evaluating sources and facts. This is your opportunity to reflect on your own habits as consumers of news and information about public affairs. Think back to your earliest memories of hearing and learning about current events – where did the information come from and how were you persuaded that it was or was not accurate or reliable? More recently, how have your habits of news consumption been developed by your family, your friends, co-workers, or others? When you encounter new information, what leads you to trust or question certain sources? What information do you think is most readily available to you, what is least

readily available (i.e. in an ideal world, what kinds of information would you receive that you do not currently receive), and how are your opinions and beliefs shaped by the information that you consume?

As you complete this paper, I am not looking for a “perfect” or “idealized” version of you – in other words, there is no need to exaggerate or fabricate some “informed citizen” model of yourself. Instead, I am hoping that you will engage in a sincere and honest effort to reflect upon the information you receive and how you use it. If you never seek out news, that’s fine. But if that’s the case, use your paper as a chance to think about all of the ways that you may passively interact with news and information about politics and government – perhaps through social media, or listening to your parents. If the only place you encounter political news is on Twitter when a friend goes on a rant, that’s fine. In this case, use the paper as a way to think about how Twitter might do a good or bad job of filtering information in ways that might influence your views. Perhaps you write a blog about politics, posting several times a day based on constant interaction with multiple news sources. That’s fine too. In this case, use the paper as a means to explain your process of evaluating the sources that you use and how you process the information to make sense of it and convey it to others. In short, the paper should convey a genuine glimpse of who you are and how you interact with news about current events and public affairs, government, and politics. This paper should be a personal narrative, using first person language.

Prior to turning in this paper, you should complete a draft and give that draft to (1) me and (2) at least two of your peers. Your peers will then offer suggestions and edits to your paper but I also encourage you to use this opportunity to invite conversations about how your information consumption is similar to or different from your peers. You should then revise the paper based upon your peers’ feedback and hand in a final draft to me, along with a brief (1 page) summary of the feedback you received and the changes you’ve made during the revision process.

Voter Guide (completed with a group; based on peer grading)

In September and October, this class will conceptualize, create, and disseminate a Voter Guide for Drake students. Likely, you will want to do initial research to find out what information students need/want and then work with existing sources to provide that information. Topics may include: how to register, what you need to vote, deciding whether to vote in Des Moines or vote at home, why you should vote, where to vote, what to expect, how to get and turn in an absentee ballot, where to get good information about the candidates who will be on the ballot, etc. To provide good information, you may need to access or compile existing resources and you may want to talk to experts (for example, someone in the Polk County Auditor’s office); I will work with the class to gain access to as many resources and experts as possible. I will also provide the class with information that has been sent out to campus in the past. As a class, we will brainstorm about the voter guide (format, dissemination, structure, content) and will use this conversation as a basis to divide the work into groups. You will work within groups to complete the Voter Guide and members of your group(s) will provide grading feedback to me.

Analysis and Reflection of Site Visits/Events (4 papers, 1-2 pages each)

Throughout the semester, I will notify you (and maintain a list in Blackboard) of opportunities to attend site visits and events. These may be speeches by candidates or national political surrogates, or small group meetings with local representatives of issue advocacy organizations, or meetings with campaign staff, or talks by journalists, or visits to government offices. I realize that each of you has a different schedule and therefore we will be unable to guarantee that the whole class will be available for any given event. Therefore, you will have a choice of which events you attend (in person or virtually) – and I will make sure that at least four of these are scheduled during our class meeting times (when we know

that all of you are available). You may attend as many of these as you like, but will be required to attend at least four. In order to receive credit for a site visit/event, you will need to submit a 1-2 page analysis and reflection within a week of the event. This short paper should include comment about what you learned, how the substance of the visit or event advanced your knowledge of political information consumption, and how it may intersect with the work of Vote Smart (whether in your specific division or in other areas).

The goal of this assignment is to allow you to gain first-hand knowledge of (a) important voices and actors in the local political environment and (b) how the information collected by Vote Smart functions in the “real world” of lived experience. To this end, you may want to ask questions or do some research about the speaker/organization/event ahead of time. If you know of an event that is not open to the whole class but you would like to attend as one of your site visits/events, talk to me and we can determine whether it is appropriate for these purposes.

Short Voting Analysis (1-2 pages)

Immediately after the election, you will submit a short (1-2 page) analysis of your own voting experience. What surprised you? How did you vote? How did your peers vote? If you didn't vote, why did you decide not to vote? Given your experience, what do you wish you had known more about? How did you feel after you voted? This is not meant to be a commentary on who you voted for or why, nor is it intended as a high-level exercise in spouting “voting is important because...” clichés; it is intended to be a reflection of your lived experience as a voter. Think of it as a tiny descriptive diary entry, or a page from your memoir. These papers will form the basis for a class conversation at the end of the semester.

Post-election Analysis paper (approximately 4 pages)

In the weeks immediately following the election, you will need to follow media coverage of the results. Most of what we see and understand about elections comes from the media and therefore, the narrative that is created by various media actors matters in determining how we interpret and understand the collective message that emerges from elections as well as how we perceive of voting as an act of individual citizenship. According to the media (and yes, you will need to cite specific commentary and specific news items): What happened? Who voted? What prompted them to vote the way they did? What do the election results tell us about the state of the country? What do they tell us about the strength of the candidates and the campaign strategies they used? What is unique (or not) about the 2020 elections? As you watch media commentary and media's interpretation of results, make sure that you're not just thinking or writing about the presidential election, but legislative and state races as well. You should also fact check any claims that you might have reason to question – what information or evidence is offered to support the assertions or explanations that are offered? Is this evidence compelling? Are there alternative ways to understand the results? You can think about this paper as a critical reading of media narratives – how do media outlets craft stories that help us make sense of ourselves and our choices?

Each written assignment must be typed using 10 or 12 point font, double spacing, and **one-inch margins (please note that the default is usually 1.25 inches)**.

Finally, a word about plagiarism. The common definition of plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, passed off as your own work. But there are other forms of plagiarism – failure to attribute information to its source and knowingly offering your work to others who intend to pass it off as their original work. Plagiarism is not only unethical, it is also illegal. **Any idea that does not originate in**

your own head, including things that you learn during the class, must be cited. Failure to attribute information to its source is a breach of academic integrity and will result in a failing grade for the course. If you have questions about how to cite sources, feel free to contact me and we can discuss this. Should you plagiarize, several things will happen. First, you will automatically receive an F in this course. Second, as required by University policy, your name will be reported to the Dean of Arts and Sciences. If you are a student in another college of the University, your name will also be reported to the dean of your college. If you have been reported for a violation of academic integrity in another class, I will proceed with a petition to expel you from Drake University. Last, if you have used someone else's work, I will notify the author to allow them to pursue any charges against you for copyright infringement or intellectual property theft. There are no exceptions to this policy. For more information about the academic integrity policy in the College of Arts and Sciences, see <http://www.drake.edu/catalog/undergrad/14-15/collegeofartsandsciences/academicregulations/>.

Tentative Schedule:

Here is a schedule of class topics and reading assignments. Some dates may change due to unforeseen circumstances. If they do, I will notify students in class and via Drake email.

Date, Topic & Reading Assignment

Week 1: Welcome and Foundation of Ideas

M 8/24/20 Welcome and go through syllabus
No reading assignment

W 8/26/20 What does it mean to be an (informed) voter? And does it matter?
Watch short video on "Downsian" voting model (link in BB)
Sean Illing "Two eminent political scientists: The problem with democracy is voters" located [here](#)
Center for Civic Design "The Epic Journey of American Voters" located [here](#)

Week 2: Where Political Views Come From

M 8/31/20 How do we get and make sense of our political views and information?
The Meenan Video "Political Socialization" on YouTube [here](#)
"Do Children Just Take Their Parents Political Beliefs" in *The Atlantic* [here](#)
"What Being Neat or Messy Says About Political Leanings" in *Scientific American* [here](#)

W 9/2/20 How do we get and make sense of our political views and information?
"Millennials' Political Views Don't Make Any Sense" in *The Atlantic* [here](#)
The Ezra Klein Show "The Age of Mega-Identity Politics" on Stitcher [here](#)
"How to Vote Well" by Learn Liberty located [here](#)

Week 3: What Information Do Voters Need and Want?

M 9/7/20 NO CLASS – LABOR DAY

W 9/9/20 Discuss the contents of the class Voter Guide
Center for Civic Design "Designing a Voter Guide" online [here](#)
Find one and share one voter guide and summarize what you think is most effective and least effective about it

R 9/10/20 Political Information Biography due by 5:00pm

Week 4: The Mechanics of Voting

M 9/14/20 State Variants on Voting
Wehle Chapters 1 and 2

W 9/16/20 Ballots and Voting Machines
Wehle Chapter 3
“The Problems of Poor Ballot Design” in *Scientific American* [here](#)

Week 5: What is the “Right” to Vote?

M 9/21/20 Is There a Right to Vote? Who Has It and Where is It?
Wehle Chapters 4 and 5

W 9/23/20 Share and Discuss Voter Guide Group Progress
Meeting with PMACS, I will be attending a virtual conference

Week 6: How The System Works

M 9/28/20 Electing a President
Wehle Chapter 6
“Does Your Vote Count?” by USA.gov available [here](#)

W 9/30/20 Electing Members of Congress
Wehle Chapter 7
Find and share an article or website with key congressional races in 2020

Week 7: Work Week

M 10/5/20 Guest Speakers

W 10/7/20 Share and Discuss Voter Guide Group Progress

Week 8: Work Week

M 10/12/20 Guest Speakers

W 10/14/20 Share and Discuss Voter Guide Group Progress

Week 9: Issues in America’s Election System

M 10/19/20 Gerrymandering and Incumbency
Wehle Chapter 8

W 10/21/20 Finalize Voter Guide!

Week 10: Thinking About Voter Turnout and Media Coverage of Elections

M 10/26/20 Voting or Nonvoting
“Why Nonvoters Choose to Opt Out” by NPR On The Media [here](#)
“What Influences American Voter Turnout” by Oxford Handbooks video [here](#)
Colin Woodard “Half of Americans Don’t Vote. What Are They Thinking?” available [here](#)



W 10/28/20 Why Media Coverage Matters

“How The News Changes the Way We Think and Behave” by BBC [here](#)

“News Use Across Social Media Platforms” by Pew Research available [here](#)

“How Younger Generations Consume News Differently” by Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism available [here](#)

“Americans Who Mainly Get Their News on Social Media Are Less Engaged, Less Knowledgeable” by Pew Research available [here](#) (read 6 pages)

Week 11: Election Day is Here!

M 11/2/20 Predictions!!!!

Bring your predictions and the evidence you’ve used to make predictions

T 11/3/20 Election Day!!!!!! Want to be a poll worker? Ask me about it!

W 11/4/20 Discuss election results!!!!

R 11/5/20 Short Voting Analysis due by 5:00pm

Week 12: Does Voting Matter?

M 11/9/20 Issues of Malapportionment and the System of Counting Votes
Wehle Chapter 9

W 11/11/20 Issues of Money in Politics
Wehle Chapter 10

Week 13: Issues in Voting

M 11/16/20 Fraud, Misinformation, and Other Controversies
Wehle Chapters 11 and 12

W 11/18/20 Guest Speaker(s)

Week 14: Thanksgiving

M 11/23/20 NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

W 11/25/20 NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Week 15: Reducing Cynicism About Voting

M 11/30/20 When Voting Matters

“One Vote” Radiolab Podcast available [here](#)

“The 19th Amendment at 100” by the Annenberg Public Policy Center video [here](#)

M 11/30/20 Post-Election Analysis due by 5:00pm

W 12/2/20 Catch Up and Say Goodbye...

Week 16:

Finals Week