

Voting and Equality

DRAFT syllabus April 2014 – subject to changes



Afghans voting despite Taliban threats, April 2014.

PLAD 2500
Fall 2014
TR 11:00 – 12:15 p.m.
Nau 142

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Office Hours: TBD

Overview

In April 2014 *New York Times* writer Serge Schmemmann observed: “Elections held earlier this year and those scheduled for later will involve more than a third of the planet’s population and make 2014 a record year for voting. Alas, not all of the recent votes represented a triumph of democracy.” If we understand democracy to be a political arrangement demanding that citizens have an equal voice in collective decision making, how well does voting meet that demand? By focusing on electoral suffrage, this seminar introduces students to the discipline of political science. It is designed for those who have little or no previous exposure to the study of politics.

Though voting seems nearly universally appreciated as the foundation of democracy, there is no democracy in the world that does not restrict its franchise in some way. Much of our discussion will address the United States, where arguments about the franchise are more familiar to us and are still far from settled. But we will take advantage of a large comparative politics literature on electoral arrangements. We will also consider philosophical questions about voting and equality raised by democratic theorists. By looking at changes in who should vote, who voters are able to vote for, the rules governing elections and their fairness or integrity, we’ll strive to assess how well voting promotes democratic and egalitarian ideals. Our readings will come from history, law and economics as well as political science. To lighten this sometimes heavy fare, we’ll read several journalistic accounts and even take in a movie or two.

A class web page will appear at the UVA Collab site: collab.virginia.edu. This site will be an important source of announcements, assignments, links to external web sites, reserve reading, a complete version of this syllabus, and other material. Check it regularly.

Class policies

[UVA students must all abide by the honor system.](#) Academic integrity is at the center of university life, and our class will both insist that you embody its principles and practices and help you work out some of the confusion around fair use, citation, evaluation of sources and related issues.

Phones must be turned off and stored during class. Laptops and tablets may be used only with wi-fi turned off, for taking notes; I reserve the right to prohibit in-class use of devices if they prove to be distracting. We will be able to access readings online and videos together using the in-room AV equipment.

Texts available for purchase (University bookstore)

Required

Brennan, J. (2012). *The ethics of voting*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

May, G. (2013). *Bending Toward Justice: The Voting Rights Act and the Transformation of American Democracy*. Basic Books.

Scott, J. W. (2007). *Parité!: Sexual equality and the crisis of French universalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Recommended

Guy-Uriel E. Charles, Heather K. Gerken, and Michael S. Kang (eds.). 2011. *Race, Reform, and Regulation of the Electoral Process: Recurring Puzzles in American Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Keyssar, A. (2009). *The right to vote: The contested history of democracy in the United States* (revised edition). New York: Basic Books.

Thompson, D. F. (2004). *Just elections: Creating a fair electoral process in the United States*. University of Chicago Press.

Other texts online (copies on Collab)

Bentele, K. G., & O'Brien, E. E. 2013. Jim Crow 2.0? Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies. *Perspectives on Politics* 11:4, 1088

Blais, A., Massicotte, L., & Yoshinaka, A. (2001). Deciding who has the right to vote: a comparative analysis of election laws. *Electoral Studies*, 20(1), 41-62.

Christiano, T. (2012). Money in Politics. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy*, 241.

Crook, M., & Crook, T. (2011). Reforming Voting Practices in a Global Age: The Making and Remaking of the Modern Secret Ballot in Britain, France and the United States, c. 1600–c. 1950. *Past & Present*, 212(1), 199-237.

Douglas, J. A. (2014). "The Right to Vote Under State Constitutions." *Vanderbilt Law Review*, 67(1).

Ronald Dworkin, "Political equality" in *Sovereign Virtue* (Harvard University Press, 2000) chapter 4.

Elmendorf, C. S., & Schleicher, D. (2012). "Districting for a Low-Information Electorate." *Yale Law Journal*, 121(7).

Fishkin, J. (2012). Weightless Votes. *Yale Law Journal*, 121(7).

- Hansen, Mogens Herman. 1999 [1991]. "The Assembly of the People." Chapter 6 in *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 125-60.
- Kramer, J. (2000). "Liberty, Equality, Sorority." *The New Yorker*, 29, 112-13.
- Krook, M. L., Lovenduski, J., & Squires, J. (2009). "Gender quotas and models of political citizenship." *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(4), 781-803.
- Lacroix, J. (2007). "A liberal defence of compulsory voting." *Politics*, 27(3), 190-195.
- Landemore, H. (2013). "Democracy as the Rule of the Dumb Many?" Chapter 2 in *Democratic reason: Politics, collective intelligence, and the rule of the many*. Princeton University Press, pp. 27-52.
- McCormick, Richard L. "Ethno-Cultural Interpretations of Nineteenth-Century American Voting Behavior." *Political Science Quarterly* 89 (June 1974): 351-77. [JSTOR]
- McDonald, M. P. (2010). American voter turnout in historical perspective. *The Oxford handbook of American elections and political behavior*, 125-143.
- Mintz, Steven. "Winning the Vote: A History of Voting Rights." *History Now* 1 (Sept. 2004). [http://www.gilderlehrman.org/historynow/09_2004/historian.php]
- Ober, J. (2008). "What the ancient Greeks can tell us about democracy". *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 11, 67-91.
- Owens, M. L. (2014). "Ex-Felons' Organization-Based Political Work for Carceral Reforms." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 651(1), 256-265.
- Phillips, A. (2004). "Defending equality of outcome." *Journal of political philosophy*, 12(1), 1-19.
- Rehfeld, A. (2011). "The child as democratic citizen." *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 633(1), 141-166.
- Shklar, J. Voting
- Stiglitz, J. E. (2012). "A Democracy in Peril." Chapter 5 in *The price of inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future*. WW Norton & Company.
- Song, S. (2009). Democracy and noncitizen voting rights. *Citizenship studies*, 13(6), 607-620.
- Ronald Dworkin, "Political equality" in *Sovereign Virtue* (Harvard University Press, 2000) chapter 4 OR
- Estlund, Utopophobia chapter from *Democratic Authority*
- Thompson, D. F. (2008). "Electoral simultaneity: Expressing equal respect." *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(3), 487-501.
- Thompson, D. E. (2013). "Are American Elections Sufficiently Democratic?" Chapter 2 in *Representation: Elections and Beyond*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 26ff.
- Toobin, Jeffrey , "Annals of Law: Holder v. Roberts," *The New Yorker*, Feb. 17, 2014, www.newyorker.com/reporting/2014/02/17/140217fa_fact_toobin.
- Verba, Sidney. (2006): "Fairness, equality, and democracy: Three big words." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 73.2 :499-540.
- Foley Chapter from Gerken book?
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- Surveys, elections, equality: Sarah Igo, *Averaged American* introduction
- 1947 movie, *Magic Town*
- The Party's Over*, 2001 – party article
- Election*, Alexander Payne, 199x. –
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Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

—**August 26:** Introduction to the Course and to each other.

—**August 28:** No class (American Political Science Association annual meeting). Read Shklar. Post 150-250 words answering Sept 2 questions at Collab forums by 6P August 31.

Principles: Equality and Respect

—**September 2:** Discuss Shklar “Voting” chapter. What does Shklar mean by “standing?” What do her ideas tell us about the importance of voting rights to public life.

—**September 4:** Thompson “Electoral Simultaneity” OR Democratic Chapter and Verba “Three Big Words”

—**September 9:** Dworkin, Political Equality (**low stakes 5% quiz** – essay/ID in advance, short MC, 20 minutes)

How much democracy?

—**September 11:** RT (markets, forums or what?)

Hansen, Mogens Herman. 1999 [1991]. “The Assembly of the People.” Chapter 6 in *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 125-60.

Ober, J. (2008). “What the ancient Greeks can tell us about democracy.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 67-91.

—**September 16:** RT Keyssar chapters 1-2, Crook and Crook Secret Ballot article (this rejoins Thompson Simultaneity article), Federalist papers SELECTIONS

Barriers Challenged and Defended

—**September 18:** RT May book

—**September 23:** RT May book

—**September 25:** (**low stakes 5% quiz** – essay/ID in advance, short MC, 20 minutes)

Intro via Blais article to restrictions

—**September 30:** RT Age – Rehfeld, Children, op-ed

—**October 2:** RT Cognitive Disability

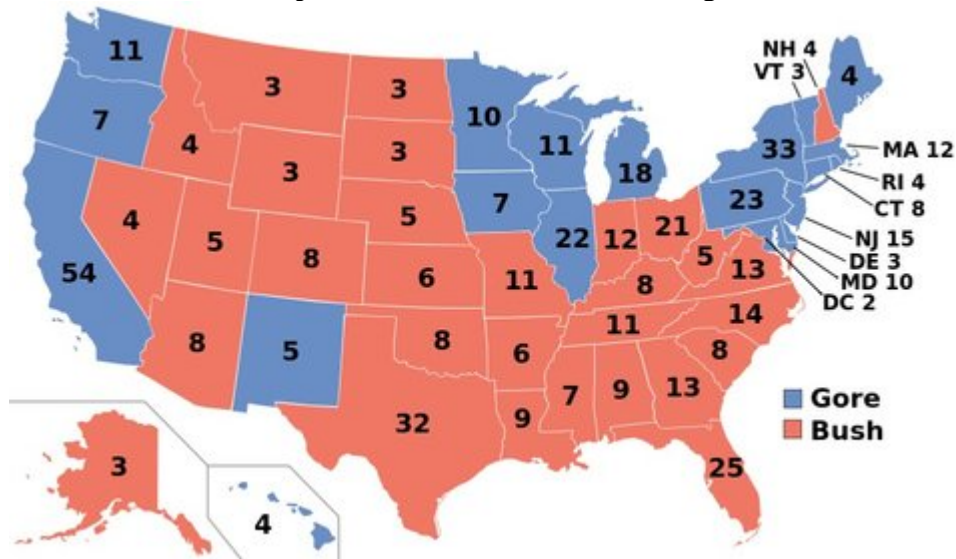
—**October 7:** RT Offender status – Owens article

—**October 9:** RT Citizenship status – Song

o—October 14: **NO CLASS, READING DAYS**

— **October 16:** **midterm 8% quiz** 30 min in class with post-quiz review and midterm party.

Structural Reform I: The Electoral College and NPV



— **October 21:** Keyssar recap; Dworkin on Bush v Gore drama. Turnout, psychology

McDonald, M. P. (2010). American voter turnout in historical perspective. *The Oxford handbook of American elections and political behavior*, 125-143.

— **October 23:** Lapidus article. FairVote website.

Structural Reform II: Parité



— **October 28:** Scott book; Krook article; Kramer article; A Phillips article

— **October 30:** Scott book

—**November 4: Structural Reform Paper due at Collab at noon (no class meeting)**

—**November 6:** Peer-graded one-paragraph Movie Review (Magic Town and Igo; Election and ; Hoffman and)

—**November 11:** RT Money

Stiglitz, J. E. (2012). “A Democracy in Peril.” Chapter 5 in *The price of inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future*. WW Norton & Company.

Christiano, T. (2012). “Money in Politics.” *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy*, 241.

—**November 13:** RT Fraud (VID, VRA) State Constitutions article

—**November 18:** RT Competence: Lippmann Public Opinion , Dumb Many

—**November 20:** RT Mandatory voting

Lacroix, J. (2007). “A liberal defence of compulsory voting.” *Politics*, 27(3), 190-195.

—**November 25: Prompt and Annotated bibliography due.** Each bib entry is an article from class or from outside, with its relevance to your position on Brennan, *Ethics of Voting*, described in the annotation. In class discussion of the challenges of the book and final essay planning.

o—November 27: **NO CLASS, Thanksgiving break**

—**December 2:** Review and discussion of Brennan, *Ethics of Voting*, Final paper preparation discussion

—**December 4: Final papers due;** brief presentations; review; last day party.

—**December 8: Final exam 7-10pm**

Requirements/Grading

Students should come to class having done any reading for the meeting and other assignments. (Some class assignments are due by the class meeting time; others are due 24 hours before.) Grades will be based on active engagement during class meetings, posts at the course blog, other brief course assignments, two papers, in-class presentations, 3 brief quizzes and a final exam. Three absences over the course of the term from our twice-weekly class meetings are allowed without penalty, but any assignment for the missed class must be completed on time (students with planned travel will be allowed by prior arrangement at least 1 week before, to take the scheduled in-class quiz slightly in advance of or simultaneously with students in the class; consult instructor for details). *There are no make-ups for missed quizzes; if you miss a quiz you will receive a fill-in grade no higher than your lowest other grade in the course.* Grades will be assigned a number between 0 and 100, with final point totals translated to letter grades as follows: 93.00 and above = A; 90.00 and above = A-; 86.51 and above = B+; 83.00 and above = B; 80.00 and above = B-; 76.51 and above = C+; 73.00 and above = C. Point breakdowns below (subject to revision):

In-Class Engagement (speaking and listening)	10%
Completion of Class Assignments (posts, 3 quizzes)	27.5%
Quizzes 9.9.14 and 9.25.14 – 10%	
Midterm Quiz 10.16.14 – 8%	
Peer-graded movie paragraph – 3.5%	
Posts 8.31.14 other dates TBD – 6%	
In-Class Research Team presentations	12.5%
Structure paper (on <i>parité</i> or The National Popular Vote)	12.5%
Brennan Critique Paper	22.5%
Prompt assignment – 5%	
Annotated Bibliography/Source list – 5%	
Final version – 12.5%	
Final exam	15%

Research Teams (12.5%)—We'll divide into six teams of three students each. Twice each term, the Research Team will take charge of the meeting's topic: crafting talking points, fielding questions, alerting the group to further directions. This is a group activity, which always makes grading a bit more challenging. After you finish your team work, I will poll each team member individually, and ask you each to state your opinion for me about how the total points your presentation receives from me should be divided: for example, 1/3 for each team member, or 50% for one person and 25% for the other two. I'll keep these evaluations completely confidential, but use them to correct for any free-riding, or to acknowledge a particularly good effort by one team member. One RT presentation will count 5% and the other 7.5%.

Structural Reform Paper (12.5%)—The first paper for the class is an argumentative essay of 1500 +/- 200 words (approximately 4 or 5 pages with 1 in. margins in Times New Roman 12) arguing for or against one of two structural reforms discussed in class during the last two weeks of October. You'll answer the questions, how have advocates for the reforms invoked claims about equality on behalf of the reforms? Why do their egalitarian arguments persuade you or fall short?

Final Paper: Critique of Brennan's book *The Ethics of Voting* (22.5%)—The last week of the class we will discuss a book that argues against the obligation to vote, saying instead that some of us have an obligation not to vote, along with several other politically controversial points. The final paper assignment for the course is a 2000 +/- 500 word (about 6-8 pages in Times New Roman 12) critique of this argument, drawing on at least 6 sources from earlier in the course to justify supporting or challenging Brennan's position.

Final Exam (15%)—A final exam (similar to the quizzes but cumulative and comprehensive) will be administered during the regularly scheduled exam time.