Law and Politics: Electing a President
Law 201x
Syllabus: Spring 2018

Professor Franita Tolson

USC Gould School of Law
Office: Room 402
213.740.5502
ftolson@law.usc.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays before class, by appointment
Class Meetings: Thursdays
4:00-6:50p.m., Law 103
Teaching Assistant: Mina Saffarian, mina.saffarian.2019@lawmail.usc.edu

REQUIRED TEXTS:


   ISBN 9781107662735

d. Additional materials will be handed out in class throughout the semester.

e. Because this course will also be driven by today’s news, each student is required to read a major newspaper every day (we recommend nytimes.com for news, drudgereport.com for political gossip, and The New Yorker for in-depth coverage), and to watch a national network television newscast (ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, FOX, PBS) every day of the semester.

REQUIRED COURSEWORK:

a. Complete all readings and participate in class discussion.

b. Attend lecture. Your attendance is recorded and counts for 10% of your grade.

c. Complete both the midterm and the final exams. This is required for a passing grade.

d. All students are required to complete a term project or paper, based on either an analysis of the current election campaign or another relevant political topic approved by a teaching assistant. Exemplary papers/projects will reexamine original materials, whether that be newspapers, tapes of the news, position papers issued, or advertisements used in the media; interview key participants, and/or use the readings and scholarly research to place their topic or issue in a larger context. Papers must be 12-15 pages, and projects should be of comparable size and scope. You must submit a 1-page proposal by March 1st, as well as a final draft by April 19th.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course examines the relationship between the rules that structure the political system, the theories behind them, and the reality of how the political system actually works. We will also consider how the system ought to work, making our class time both practical and theoretical. We will look at how we select and elect our candidates, primarily in Presidential politics, why so few people vote, and why so many think the system is broken. We will try to define the place of politics in contemporary American life and culture, and how it has evolved over time. The course will proceed in a combined lecture and
seminar style, with significant student participation encouraged. Students should remain immersed in current events and political happenings independently all week long. The attached syllabus is a basic framework of the topics and reading assignments for the course. It is expected that each student will prepare the weekly assignments prior to that week’s class. Students leave this class understanding the interplay between politics, media, and law, and how the effects on individual voters feed back into the system in an endless cycle of transformation and inertia that hopefully results in democratic participation and progress.

**SCHEDULE:**

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<td>Ch 1, Voting Rights: The Next Generation (17-33)</td>
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<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Voters and Party Loyalty</td>
<td>Cramer:</td>
<td>Ch 21-30 (307-430)</td>
<td>Polsby et al:</td>
<td>Ch 1, Voters (1-24)</td>
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<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>Cramer:</td>
<td>Ch 31-40 (431-497)</td>
<td>Polsby et al:</td>
<td>Ch 2, Groups (25-48)</td>
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<td>Ch 3, Explaining Perceptions of Competitive Threat in a Multi-Racial Context (52-74)</td>
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<td>Ch 4, The Institutional Turn in Election Law Scholarship (86-100)</td>
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<td>Class 6</td>
<td>Rules and Resources</td>
<td>Cramer:</td>
<td>Ch 51-60 (572-625)</td>
<td>Polsby et al:</td>
<td>Ch 3, Rules and Resources (49-84)</td>
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Class 7

***IN CLASS MIDTERM EXAM***

Class 8

***ONE-PAGE PAPER/PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE***

The Nomination Process
Cramer: Ch 61-70 (626-681)
Polsby et al: Ch 4, The Nomination Process (87-134)
Film: *The War Room*, Dir. Hegedus & Pennebaker, 1993, 96 min

Class 9

The Campaign
Cramer: Ch 71-80, (682-733)
Polsby et al: Ch 5, The Campaign (135-198)

Class 10

Election Law and Democracy’s Boundaries
Cramer: Ch 81-90 (734-789)
Charles et al: Ch 6, Empirical Legitimacy and Election Law (117-149)
Ch 7, Judging Democracy’s Boundaries (150-174)

Class 11

Appraisals
Cramer: Ch 91-100 (790-844)
Polsby et al: Ch 6, Appraisals (201-228)
Charles et al: Overview: Election Performance and Reform (175-178)
Ch 8, New directions in the Study of Voter Mobilization (179-191)

Class 12

American Parties and Democracy
Cramer: Ch 101-110 (845-898)
Polsby et al: Ch 7, American Parties and Democracy (229-242)
Appendix C, Selections from the Democratic and Republican Party Platforms, 2008 (261-266)

Class 13

The Future of American Politics
Cramer: Ch 111-120 (899-953)
Charles et al: Ch 9, Popular Election Monitoring (192-208)
Ch 10, Democracy in the United States, 2020 and Beyond: How Can Scholarly Research Shape a Vision and Help to Realize It? (209-226)
Ch 11, Partisanship, Public Opinion and Redistricting (227-262)
Class 14

***PAPER/PROJECT DUE***

Review Session

Cramer: Ch 121-130 (954-1012)
Charles et al: Ch 12, More or Less: Searching for Regulatory Balance (263-286)

Class 15

***FINAL EXAM***

GRADING POLICY:

a. General Grading System
   Final Grades will be calculated as follows:
   Participation 10%
   Paper 30%
   Midterm 30%
   Final 30%
   100%

b. Material Covered on Exams
   a. The Midterm Exam will cover material read and discussed during the first half of the semester.
   b. The Final Exam is not comprehensive. It will cover only material read and discussed during the second half of the semester.

c. Make-Up Exam Policy
   a. Unless you have an exam conflict (another exam at the exact same time), you will be expected to take the exam on the scheduled day, at the scheduled hour.
   b. For those with an exam conflict, verified medical excuse, or emergency, there will be only one make-up exam scheduled during the days following the scheduled exam time. Since the midterm exams will be graded before the following lecture, there will be no make-up exam scheduled after that lecture.
   c. If you know that you will be unable to take the exam on the scheduled day, you must inform the TA at least 72 hours before the scheduled test time. If you fail to do so, you must take the make-up exam at whatever time it is scheduled.
   d. To receive a passing grade in this course, you must take both the midterm and the final.
   e. Please note prior experience with the University Registration Office indicates that students who take the make-up final exam do not receive final semester grades until well after the semester's end. During the interim, students’ transcripts reflect an Incomplete.

d. Academic Dishonesty
   a. Plagiarism, cheating, copying, etc., will not be tolerated. Incidences of academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to SCAMPUS guidelines.