This course will critically examine a number of the major debates in the comparative literature on voting behaviour and public opinion. The works discussed draw primarily on research conducted in North America and Western Europe. You are welcome to write papers on countries in other regions.

Course Requirements
If you are not clear about the expectations for any of the assignments, be sure to consult with me.

Research Paper
The main course requirement is a 20 to 25 page research paper on a topic of your choice related to voting behaviour and/or public opinion. The paper is worth 60% of your grade. You must consult me about your choice of topic. If you wish to count this course as a Canadian politics course, your paper must focus on Canada or compare Canada with another country or countries. You are strongly encouraged to conduct original research with a view to writing a paper that could potentially be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. You will formulate a research question, develop one or more hypotheses and then conduct original research in order to come up with an answer. Your research method could involve the analysis of existing data (e.g. from the Canadian Election Studies or other national election studies or crossnational studies) or the analysis of statistics from official sources or the collection of your own data through e.g. a content analysis of election coverage, or it could involve a combinaton of methods. Your paper must identify the research question and must include a review of the relevant academic literature, an explanation of your research methods, an analysis of your findings and a concluding discussion (including possible limitations and future research directions). If you do not have adequate training in conducting research, you may instead write a paper that addresses a clear question, synthesizes the academic literature on the topic and develops a well-reasoned response to your motivating question. You will present your research paper in the final two classes. You will also act as a discussant for another student’s presentation. The oral presentation and
discussant comments will count for 5% of your grade. You will have the opportunity to revise your paper in response to my feedback and comments from the discussant and other students. The final paper will be due one week after your presentation. There will be a penalty of two marks per weekday for late submission.

**Paper Proposal**
A two-page paper proposal is due on **February 14, 2019**. It should outline your proposed topic, pose your research question or motivating question and describe your proposed data source(s) (if applicable). A preliminary bibliography should be attached. The proposal is worth 3% of your grade.

**Short papers**
You will choose any two of the following three options. Each short paper is worth 15% of your grade. The paper should be five pages in length, double-spaced. For all three options, you may want to consult additional sources.

**Research Design Paper**
For this option, you will prepare a five-page paper relating to one of the weekly topics. The paper will discuss the key empirical challenges involved in testing the validity of the core concept (e.g. party identification), the central hypothesis (e.g. economic voting) or the main argument (e.g. cognitive heuristics can compensate for shortfalls in political knowledge), as appropriate. If you are not sure what the focus should be, you are welcome to consult me in advance. You will also briefly sketch a suggested way of addressing the challenges e.g. using panel data, taking advantage of a natural experiment, conducting a survey or lab experiment, etc. Be sure to acknowledge the limitations of your proposed design e.g. limited external validity (i.e. limited ability to generalize beyond the cases studied) or internal validity (i.e. limited ability to infer a causal relationship), possible measurement biases, etc.

**Article Review**
In consultation with me, you will choose a peer-reviewed journal article relating to one of the weekly topics. If you wish to count this course as a Canadian politics course, your article must focus on Canada or Canada in comparative perspective. The article can be comparative or country specific but it must illustrate, extend or challenge the required readings for that topic. In addition to discussing how the article does so, you should critically address the research design and assess the validity of the conclusions drawn e.g. How appropriate are the data used? How valid are the indicators used? Is the sample adequate? Have alternative explanations been adequately tested? How generalizable are the results? Etc.

**Reflection Paper**
For this option, you will focus on the normative implications of the topic under discussion in a given week. For example, does it matter whether or not people vote on how they think the economy has been doing or whether they understand ideological terminology or whether they are well informed about politics, etc.?
Due Date
Your paper should be posted in the discussion forum on MyCourses on the Monday preceding the class dealing with the topic in question. Everyone is expected to read the paper and be prepared to discuss it in class. You will make a brief oral presentation, followed by class discussion.

Participation
You are expected to come to class having done the readings and thought about them critically. Participation in class discussions is required. Class participation is essential and will account for 7% of your grade. Ahead of each class, possible discussion questions will be posted on MyCourses. You should think about these questions as you do the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. You are, of course, encouraged to come up with other questions that we could discuss as a class.

Summary of Grade Breakdown

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short papers (15% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation and discussant comments</td>
<td>5%</td>
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Please note that a grade of ‘K’ (incomplete) will only be permitted under exceptional circumstances (e.g. illness). If there are any special circumstances of which I should be aware, you should speak to me as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity
McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Language Rights
In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

Course Outline

NOTE: I reserve the right to modify the syllabus timeline or specific readings as needed.

All readings are either on reserve in the Library, available online or posted on MyCourses. Should any reading not be available, please let me know without delay.
JANUARY 10: Introduction

No readings

JANUARY 17: Back to Basics


Note: We will not be discussing Downs in this class but it is important that you read these chapters now to provide context for later discussions

JANUARY 24: Is Party Identification Meaningful?


January 31: It’s the Economy, Stupid!


https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0010414012463877?casa_token=kkhYHNaPHGUAAAAA%3AQqQv0dvzz3QHIGLyRA043Y-QzyPhQPUO8_ujJreLmg2RfdOBlyOSKesviwgFspvqk89VcVY4d8

https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0261379416304619?token=71A36BC62D2500B16FF582FC8718B7A8ACC6E1D03CC5F87C3D8AFFF48D544319D5A3F0473F3B8FCFCF4C9D23CCEB875


FEBRUARY 7: The “Gender Gap”


https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0192512100214007


**FEBRUARY 14: Are Voters “Ideologically Innocent”?**

**Note: paper proposal due in class**


**FEBRUARY 21: Making Do with Less**


FEBRUARY 28: The Impact of the Media


MARCH 7: Study Break

MARCH 14: Do Campaigns Matter?


MARCH 21: To Vote or Not to Vote?

André Blais (2000) *To Vote or Not to Vote: The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice Theory*, introduction, chapters 1 to 5, conclusion. JF1001 B5 2000 [On Reserve]


Recommended:


MARCH 28: Personality and Genetics


APRIL 5: No class

APRIL 12: Paper Presentations I

APRIL 15: Paper Presentations II