Public Opinion and Voting Behavior  
(Spring 2008)

Instructor: Dr. Frank C.S. Liu  
Office Hours: M & W 1-3pm or by appointment

Class Time: M 1:10 ~ 4:00pm  
Phone Number: 07-5252000 ext. 5555

Course Description

This is a course for graduate students to prepare or advance their own projects on political behavior or opinion formation. The course will focus on the review of classics about voters and information processing and the exploration of recent inspiring research works. This is a theory- and research-oriented course, so the topics will not be constrained to Taiwanese context. Studies, however, are encouraged to discover interesting phenomena that have not been identified by American political scientists. The topics addressed in this class include party identification, belief system, the formation of voter preferences, and social network effects.

Course Texts and Readings

The course requires a few books and a pack of journal articles. Most articles and books are available in the library or can be obtained through university’s electronic journal archive or the interlibrary loan system. The books that I suggest you to buy or borrow earlier for this class are:


Grading Policy

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three reaction papers</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>oral presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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- Class participation (20%): Involvement in class discussion include your attendance, questions provided for discussion, and respondances to questions. You are asked to read through the given materials and bring thoughts to the class.
• **Reaction papers (30%)**: You are free to pick up three weeks to write reaction papers in the beginning of the semester and write papers that each has five pages (no less than four and not longer than six). Reaction papers should have your (re)organization of the assigned readings and your thoughts (evaluation or critiques) about the papers. Bonus points will be given to papers with extended (self-selected) readings that help develop arguments or clarify points.

• **Research paper and oral presentation (40%, 10%)**: Your research paper should be a semester-long project and the topic you choose be related to one of the subjects this class addresses. (You will need my consent if you want to write something beyond the scope of this class.) You can extend your reaction papers into a term paper, but there is no need to do so. Your research paper should be 10 - 15 pages (double-spaced) in English, or 10,000 words or 25 pages in Chinese. Papers are graded based on the importance of the topic, the choice and organization of literature (there should be at least 3 journal articles published in recent 5 years), your methodology, the presentation of your findings, the interpretation of your results, and the format your paper (use APA style).

• All reaction papers are due in class. The term paper is due in the beginning of the last class. Note that I do not give “I” for incomplete works. Make sure you turn in the papers before the deadlines. The cover page of papers should include the following information: class name, author’s full name and student id, paper type (mid-term paper or final term paper), turn-in date, and contact information.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Introduction to the Class [ 2/21 ]**

- In class: discuss the purpose of the class, the choice of topics, and necessary arrangement of the topics chosen.

**Part I: The Spirit in Your Head: What Drives You to Make a Voter Choice?**


- **Before Class:**

- **Supplemental:**

**Topic 2: Belief Systems [ 3/20 ]**

- **Before Class:**

- **Supplemental:**
Part II: Information Processing and Political Context


- NOTE: I will be attending the MPSA conference in the week of 4/3. This class may be rescheduled.

  Before Class:

  Supplemental:

Topic 4: Columbia School and Network Effects [4/17 and 4/24]

- Before Class:

- Supplemental:
Part III: Linking Personal Attributes to Political Behavior

Topic 5: Ambivalence and Its Consequences [5/1]

- Before Class:

- Supplemental:


- Before Class:

- Supplemental:

Part IV: When Voters are Survey Respondents ...

Topic 7: Political Knowledge and Voters’ Competence [5/22 and 5/29]

- Before Class:


Supplemental:


**Topic 8: Can Respondents “Deliberate”? A Controversy about Deliberative Polling [ 6/5 ]**

Before Class:


Supplemental:


**Concluding Remarks & Student Oral Presentation [ 6/12 ]**

Topics important but not be able to be covered this class include selective processes, economic voting, strategic voting, cocktail effects, mandate effects, political efficacy, etc. You are encouraged to apply and extend the knowledge you obtain in this class to explore these topics in your future research.