

PARTICIPATION & POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN AMERICA (SPECIAL TOPIC)

DUKE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

Political participation is revered in democratic theory as the way citizens shape their government. But many political scientists question whether political participation works as theorized. Noting low levels of citizen knowledge, abysmal voter turnout, and government officials that seem to represent a few instead of the many, some argue that the “folk theory of democracy” is rotten at its core.

In this course, we examine the relationship between the American people and their government. We ask: do citizens have meaningful policy attitudes to express? Who participates in politics and why? Under what circumstances, if ever, do government officials respond to citizen demands? We will use both normative theory and empirical political science to answer these questions and apply our answers to analyze policy cases including felony disenfranchisement, ballot initiatives, and election day reforms. Throughout, students will reflect on their role as members of a democratic polity and develop new skills for engaging in politics effectively.

WHAT WILL I LEARN TO DO?

Students will engage with major theoretical debates on political participation and representation to build self-efficacy and awareness with respect to pressing political issues. Specifically, by the end of the course, students will be able to:

- *Identify contributions.* Annotate both empirical and normative political science texts to identify main ideas, research design, and analytical conclusions as relevant to democratic theory. Appraise quality of information and arguments.
- *Apply to “big ideas.”* Use evidence from multiple texts to answer big questions within the study of representation. Determine where ideas connect and diverge. Evaluate quality of evidence.
- *Design and execute political act.* Appraise pathways for learning about and engaging in politics. Justify an approach and implement it on a real-world issue of your choosing. Reflect on and refine approach.

HOW WILL THE INSTRUCTOR KNOW IF I’VE LEARNED IT?

Course assignments are designed to assess your mastery of learning goals. I expect you will need time and practice to build these skills, and the assessment structure reflects this. Three types of assignments, worth progressively more over the course of the semester, build on each other and require you to slowly implement more learning goals simultaneously. These assignments give you opportunities to practice, receive feedback, and try again as you work toward mastery. Assessments include: text annotations, concept maps, and the participatory act project.

Course Information

PSCI 290
Fall 2025
T/Th 8:30–9:45 a.m.
LSRC A247

Instructor Information

Professor Allison Anoll
allison.anoll@duke.edu
Office Hours:
T 10:30-12:30 p.m.
Sign up on calendly:
<https://calendly.com/allison-anoll/office-hours>
Gross Hall 291

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Assignment	Description	Value	Relevant Learning Goal	More Resources
Annotations	Apply and demonstrate annotation skills on syllabus and early texts	Syllabus = 5% Reading = 5%	<i>Identify contributions</i>	Details on Canvas
Concept Maps	Answer the unit question by visually organizing key concepts on a single piece of printer paper, noting where thinkers challenge and complement one another. 3 unit maps + 1 exam map	Unit 1 = 10% Unit 2 = 12% Unit 3 = 15% Exam = 16%	<i>Identify contributions</i> <i>Apply to "big ideas"</i>	Instructions, rubric, examples on Canvas
Participatory Act Project	Students will analyze the unit's content to develop a process for engaging in politics and apply it to an issue of their choice. Project broken into 3 assignments that build on one another.	Part 1 = 10% Part 2 = 12% Part 3 = 15%	<i>Identify contributions</i> <i>Apply to "big ideas"</i> <i>Design and execute political act</i>	Instructions and rubric on Canvas

HOW WILL I BE SUPPORTED ALONG THE WAY?

Attending class is of utmost importance to your success—this is where most class content and assignment details will be discussed. But in addition, the instructor is available to you during office hours, by email, or during scheduled appointments. Students can use office hours to clarify assignment goals, follow-up about class content, seek feedback on early drafts, and discuss graded feedback. This is also a place for discussing concerns that may come up. You can sign up for a virtual or in-person office hours appointment with Prof. Anoll here: <https://calendly.com/allison-anoll/office-hours>

WHAT ARE THE RULES AND NORMS OF THIS COURSE?

Attendance.

After the first few days of class I will not take attendance BUT it will be difficult for you to succeed in this course without regular attendance. Class time is when we consider how the disparate assigned readings fit together and how they relate to “big questions.” Much of our content is explored through discussion and in class we will cover the assignment goals in detail. Missing more than 1-2 classes will likely begin to affect your performance on assignments.

With that said, you should not attend class if you are sick. As an adult, you should use your discretion regarding other (occasional) obligations that might arise around family, work, etc. I will make slides available to individual students upon request (they will not be regularly available on Canvas) and you can work with your classmates to get missed notes. If extenuating circumstances produce extended absences, reach out directly to Prof. Anoll to discuss accommodations.

Academic Honesty.

Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Members of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and non-academic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity. Duke University has high expectations for students' scholarship and conduct. In accepting admission, students indicate their willingness to subscribe to and be governed by the rules and regulations of the university, which flow from the Duke Community Standard (DCS): <https://dukecommunitystandard.students.duke.edu/>

Generative AI Course Policy.

Each assignment carries its own rules about the use of generative AI software like ChatGPT. Read the assignment details closely to determine whether AI can be used on participatory act assignments or assignment components. The instructor is available to help you understand how and when generative AI can advance your goals versus inhibit your learning.

Reading and Materials.

You are not required to buy any books for this course. All materials will be available on Canvas. You are, however, expected to read and annotate all the assigned reading before each class and bring hardcopies or annotated digital copies on the assigned days. This interaction with the material is central to this course's construction and to your success. Assignments are designed to assess not only how well you know the material we cover, but how well you build your own ideas from the course content. Further, we often work directly with readings in class. As a result, performing at an "A" level is possible only if you read the materials and come prepared to interact with them. I suggest reading the materials in the order listed on the syllabus.

Technology in the Classroom.

Pedagogical research on teaching and learning shows that students learn and retain more when they handwrite their notes and are free from technological distractions like laptops, phones, and tablets. As a result, this is a technology-free classroom. Laptops are not allowed during class without an explicit exception from the instructor, and cellphones must be turned to silent. I make only one exception to this technology-free policy: you can bring a digital writing or reading tablet to take notes or reference annotated readings but you **MUST** turn off wi-fi and notifications at the start of class (i.e., put it in airplane mode). I retain the right to change this policy at any point or revoke individuals' technology usage if it is distracting to the broader classroom environment.

Late Work.

Late work puts an unnecessary burden on the grader of your assignments and as a result, is subject to a penalty. An assignment submitted one day late is subject to a 5% penalty; two days late is a 10% penalty; three days late is a 15% penalty. Work will not be accepted after three days from its due date. Extenuating circumstances should be discussed with Prof. Anoll directly.

References + Letters of Recommendation.

It is my policy that I only write letters of recommendation for students who have completed a full course with me and have received a final letter grade of "A." If you need a letter of recommendation or reference, please visit this webpage for information about timeline and process: <https://allisonanoll.com/references-and-recs/>

Students with Disabilities.

If you need course accommodations due to a disability, please make an appointment with Prof. Anoll. We will work together along with Duke Access and Accommodation Services to meet your needs: <https://access.duke.edu/requests/>

The Stuff of Life.

Inevitably, things come up during the semester that can make it challenging for some students to follow the policies outlined above or affect their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If at any point you are struggling to fulfill the expectations of this course, please contact Prof. Anoll so we can find solutions together to help you succeed in class. The earlier you do this, the easier it is to find a solution. Further, here is a list of resources that can help:

- [Duke Reach](#). Provides services to support students in managing all aspects of wellbeing, challenges related to mental health, physical health, social adjustment, and other stressors. Write the team at dukereach@duke.edu
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#). Offers counseling services. You can walk in or call 919-660-1000 to get started.
- [TimelyCare](#). Online platform for 24/7 mental health support.
- [Academic Resource Center](#). Offers services to support students academically through time management, academic skills and strategies, course-specific tutoring, and more. Available for free to undergraduate Duke students. Contact by phone (919-684-5917) or by email theARC@duke.edu
- [Writing Studio](#). Consults available at all stages of the writing process.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Date	Topics, Readings, and Assignments
<p>Unit 1: Does the Demos Know What They Should Know?</p> <p>In this unit, we will explore a question foundational to the rest of our studies – to what extent are humans capable of fulfilling their role as informed citizens of a democratic society?</p>	
<p><u>Week 1</u> 8/26</p> <p>8/28</p>	<p>Course introduction: overview and structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No readings <p>Unit introduction: Democracy and its demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delli Carpini & Keeter (23pg) - <i>Syllabus annotation due 8/31 by 8pm</i>
<p><u>Week 2</u> 9/2</p> <p>9/4</p>	<p>A sorry state of affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delli Carpini & Keeter (17pg) - Pew Report (7pg) - Annenberg Public Policy Center Report (2pg) <p>Response 1: They know more than your studies show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pérez (9pg) - Krosnick (9pg) - Weaver et al (6pg) - <i>Reading annotation due 9/7 by 8pm</i>
<p><u>Week 3</u> 9/9</p> <p>9/11</p>	<p>Response 2: They have tricks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lau & Redlawsk (4pg) - Zárate, Quezada-Llanes, and Armenta (9pg) - Kuklinski & Quirk (21pg) <p>Response 3: They can learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eagan (3pg) - Elstub (4pg) - America in One Room executive summary (6pg) - Ackerman & Fishkin (7pg) - Optional: Ackerman & Fishkin (16pg – deliberation day details)
<p><u>Week 4</u> 9/16</p>	<p>Policy study: So, what about ballot initiatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tolbert & Smith (7pg) - Adams (11pg) - Gerber (6pg) - Smith (7pg)

9/18	Unit review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reading - <i>Bring draft of Concept Map 1 to class</i> - <i>Concept Map 1 due 9/21 by 8pm</i>
<p>Unit 2: Do Government Officials Respond How They Should Respond?</p> <p>In this unit, we will consider theories of “representation” and determine if various governmental institutions are “representative” and under what conditions.</p>	
<u>Week 5</u> 9/23 9/25	Unit introduction: “Good” representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dovi (8pg) - Urbinati & Warren (2pg) - Urbinati (6pg) - Eulau & Karps (8pg) Agent 1: Legislators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hill & Leighley (9pg) - Lee & Oppenheimer (12pg) - Kalla & Broockman (10pg)
<u>Week 6</u> 9/30 10/2	Agent 2: Executives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gillion (21pg) - Manza & Cook (3pg) Agent 3: Bureaucrats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dwindar (12pg) - Friedman & Ponomarenko (18pg) - <i>Act Project 1 due 10/5 by 8pm</i>
<u>Week 7</u> 10/7 10/9	Agent 4: Courts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harris & Sen (10pg) - Collins (5pg) Agent 5: Local Politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baycheck (7pg) - Anzia (10pg)
<u>Week 8</u> 10/14 10/16	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK Policy study: So, what about felony disenfranchisement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sentencing Project Report (9pg) - Clegg (9pg) - Mauer (11pg)

<p><u>Week 9</u> 10/21</p> <p>10/23</p>	<p>Unit review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reading - <i>Bring draft of Concept Map 2 to class</i> - <i>Concept Map 2 due 10/26 by 8pm</i> <p>Panel of experts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reading
<p>Unit 3: Does the Demos Participate How They Should Participate?</p> <p>In this unit, we will explore the types of and patterns in political participation. We will try to figure out what produces these patterns and how they might change.</p>	
<p><u>Week 10</u> 10/28</p> <p>10/30</p>	<p>Unit introduction: Searching for three theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verba et al (13pg) - Fraga (3pg) - Campbell (4pg) <p>Variable 1: Not all can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keyssar (7pg) - Amendments document - Fraga (13pg) - Watch: John Oliver Episode - Uggen & Manza (18pg)
<p><u>Week 11</u> 11/4</p> <p>11/6</p>	<p>But for those who can... a framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anoll (9pg) <p>NO CLASS – AA at conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Participatory Act 2 due 11/9 by 8pm</i>
<p><u>Week 12</u> 11/11</p> <p>11/13</p>	<p>Variable 2: They think it matters (pB)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brunk (9pg) - Soss (29pg) <p>Variable 3: The costs are surmountable (C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Berinsky (11pg) - Markovich & White (8pg)
<p><u>Week 13</u> 11/18</p> <p>11/20</p>	<p>Variable 4: The selective benefits are high (D)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - McClendon (10pg) - Anoll (27pg) <p>Policy study: So, should election day be a national holiday?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News article pack (6pg) - Addonizio et al (5pg)

<u>Week 14</u> 11/25	Unit review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reading - <i>Bring draft of Concept Map 3 to class</i> - <i>Concept Map 3 due 11/30 by 8pm</i>
11/27	NO CLASS – university holiday
<u>Week 15</u> 12/2	Choices, choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cohen et al (8pg) - Broockman & Kalla (5pg) - Young (18pg) - Hogan (10pg)
12/4	So.... now what? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reading - <i>Bring Concept Maps 1-3 to class</i> - <i>Participatory Act 3 due 12/7 by 8pm</i>
<u>Exam</u>	<i>Saturday, 12/13 2-5pm</i>

COURSE GRADING SCALE

93 and above	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
80-82.99	B-
77-79.99	C+
73-76.99	C
70-72.99	C-
67-69.99	D+
60-66.99	D
0-59.99	F

	Tuesday		Thursday		Sunday (8pm)	Pages
8/26	Course intro		Intro unit 1: Knowledge		Syllabus annotation	23
9/2	A sorry state		Response 1		Reading annotation	50
9/9	Response 2		Response 3			54
9/16	Policy study: Ballot initiatives		Review, unit 1 (draft map)		Map 1	31
9/23	Intro unit 2: Responsive		Legislators			55
9/30	Executives		Bureaucrats		Part. Act 1	54
10/7	Courts		Local			32
10/14	Fall break		Policy study: Felony disenfranchisement			29
10/21	Review, unit 2 (draft map)		Panel of experts		Map 2	0
10/28	Intro unit 3: Participation		Variable 1: Not all can			60
11/4	A framework		AA at conference		Part. Act 2	9
11/11	Variable 2 (B)		Variable 3 (C)			57
11/18	Variable 4 (D)		Policy study: National holiday for voting			48
11/25	Review, unit 3 (draft map)		Thanksgiving		Map 3	0
12/2	Choices, choices		So...now what?		Part. Act 3	41
12/13	(Sat.) Exam – 2pm					
key	<i>Class</i>	<i>No class</i>	<i>Due</i>		<i>Average pages:</i>	36