

GOVT 319 - 008: Election Analysis

Jennifer N. Victor, Ph.D.

Spring 2023

E-mail: jvictor3@gmu.edu

Twitter: [@jennifernvictor](https://twitter.com/jennifernvictor)

Class Hours: M/W 12:00 - 1:15 p.m.

Office Hours (in person): M/W 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Office Hours (virtual): [virtual scheduler link](#)

Web: jvictor.gmu.edu

Course website: blackboard.gmu.edu

Classroom: Innovation Hall 135

Office: Aquia Hall 325

(document updated January 18, 2023)

Teaching Assistant: **Tim Bynion**, Ph.D. student

Office Hours (in person): M/W 1:30 - 2:30

E-mail: tbynion@gmu.edu

Office: Aquia Hall 304

Course Description

This course is designed for Democracy Lab students, and select others, as a continuation of the Voter Turnout Experiment project from fall 2022. Students in this class will learn to organize, analyze, visualize, and present the findings of the data collected in the fall study. The class is one-half substantive and one-half hands-on. The substantive focus of the class explores the political science literature on voting behavior, voter turnout, and experimental social science. The hands-on portion of the class teaches essential skills in data analysis.

Course Objectives

There are two primary goals for this course. First, students should gain a working familiarity with the literature on voter behavior. Students will become familiar with historical and contemporary trends in voter turnout in U.S. elections and master the theoretical frameworks that guide research in this area. Second, students will gain practical skills for managing, analyzing, and presenting quantitative data, including data visualization and oral presentation. Students will gain basic skills in the R statistical programming language and experience using base-R, tidyverse, and ggplot packages.

Course Format

This course is being taught in-person and may not be completed in hybrid fashion. **Mondays will be seminar days**, where we have class discussions on assigned readings. **Wednesdays will be lab days**, where we focus on skills and hands-on learning with the study data.

Course Policies

Graded Components

The following standard grading scale will be used to assign course grades based on the following weighted components.

A+ instructor discretion	A 100 - 93.5	A- 93.4 - 89.5
B+ 89.4 - 86.5	B 86.4 - 83.5	B- 83.4 - 79.5
C+ 79.4 - 76.5	C 76.4 - 73.5	C- 73.4 - 69.5
D 69.4 - 59.5	F < 59.4	

- *Labs (20%)* – Lab assignments will reinforce skills from Wednesday class sessions. Labs not completed in class must be submitted before the next Wednesday class session. Students will submit labs on Blackboard.
- *Midterm exam (25%)* – There will be an open-book, in-class exam consisting of identifications and essays on **Wednesday, March 8**. A review guide will be provided.
- *Research Project (25%)* – Students may work individually or in pairs to complete a research project. Projects will be presented as research posters. Posters presented at the Schar Research Fair on **April 18** will receive 15 bonus points. Posters not presented at the research fair will be due **May 3**. Research projects will be aimed at testing a hypothesis generated from the Voter Turnout Experiment data. Students who produce products of sufficient quality will be invited to include their contribution in the VTE manuscript (led by Prof. Victor and Tim Bynion) and students will be listed as co-authors on the paper, which we aim to publish. Project components will be submitted on the following schedule:
 1. Introduction/research question (100 - 250 words), **Feb. 15**
 2. Annotated bibliography (4 - 8 sources), **Feb. 22**
 3. Background/literature review/theory & hypotheses (200 - 500 words), **Mar. 1**
 4. Research design, descriptive statistics (200 - 300 words), **Mar. 22**
 5. Hypothesis tests, visualizations, analysis (300 - 400 words), **Apr. 5**
 6. Complete poster (1,250 - 2,100 words), including abstract (100 - 150 words) and conclusion (100 - 250 words), , **Apr. 18**
- *Final Exam 30%* There will be an open-book, in-class exam consisting of identifications and essays on **Monday, May 15**. A review guide will be provided.

Late Work

There are no opportunities for earning extra or bonus credit in this course. Late assignments may be submitted for a 5 percent per day penalty. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of instruction for the semester on the university calendar (May 2).

Attendance

Learning is an active, rather than passive, exercise. To succeed in this class, read all the assigned readings using an active and engaged reading comprehension strategy, attend class prepared to engage with colleagues about the material, practice self-respect, peer-respect, humility, and self-assurance. Be willing to take risks and to receive constructive criticism as a collective means of advancing the work, not as a personal rebuke. Scholarship is not personal.

COVID-19 Mitigation

In accordance with university policy, all students are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, including booster shots. Students are encouraged to reduce their risk to catching or spreading

viruses, including COVID-19 by wearing masks that cover their nose and mouth while indoors. In addition to following state, county, and university health policies, the class may vary policies and expectations regarding masks or other mitigation strategies depending on current data. If students experience health or other personal emergencies during the course, they must communicate their situation and needs with the instructor, who will work with you to devise a contingency plan for completing the course.

Technology

Students will need regular access to computer and internet technology to complete this course. Students may bring laptops or tablets to class for the purpose of referencing or taking notes; however, I recommend students minimize screen usage in class and take notes by hand. I recommend the use of bibliographic software to store references (e.g., Zotero) and statistical software for data analysis (e.g., R, Stata).

Plagiarism

Students in this course will comply with the [George Mason University Honor Code](#). There are three simple guidelines to follow with respect to academic integrity:

1. All work you submit must be your own
2. When using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations
3. If you are uncertain about the expectations for any assignment, ask for clarification.

Any student engaged in any academic misconduct will receive an F on the offending exam or assignment. Egregious violations will result in an F grade for the course and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Students with disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the instructor and contact [Disability Services](#), (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Diversity, equality, and inclusion

George Mason University values diversity in its learning, research, and civic activities. All members of the Mason community are asked to show respect to one another at all times. The learning environment in this class respects a wide array of viewpoints. Students of all cultural, ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds are welcome. More information about Mason's policies surrounding diversity can be found at the [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#). Should you need accommodations related to observing a [religious holiday](#), please contact the instructor. It is your responsibility to communicate with the instructor if religious observations conflict with course requirements.

Student Privacy

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) grants students continuous access to educational records upon their request, allows students to amend their record if errors are found, and restricts how and when educational records can be disclosed. Your instructor will not release information about your academic record in this course to anyone without the student's permission.

Email

Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. Email etiquette: An email is a professional correspondence; do not write it as if it is a text message, snap, tweet, or IM. Always use a salutation and sign your name. Consider creating a signature that automatically inserts your name and basic contact information at the bottom of your emails. Use proper punctuation and grammar.

Dropping or Withdrawing

January 30	Last day to add
February 6	Last day to drop with no tuition penalty
February 13	Last day to drop with 50% tuition penalty
February 14 - 27	Unrestricted withdraw with 100% tuition penalty
February 28 - April 3	Selective withdraw (undergrads only)

After April 3 there are no options for withdrawing from the course. If you have concerns about your performance in the course, or you find yourself unable to perform for any reason, you should discuss your concerns with your teaching assistant, professor, advisor, and Assistant Dean (in that order). Students seeking to drop or withdraw are responsible for doing so on their own in Patriot Web.

Consumption of Political News

As a part of this course, it is your responsibility to be well-informed about current events and political news. It is increasingly difficult to learn about political events in a way that is even-handed and non-partisan. Here are some tips about how to consume news in a way that will provide you with the most value:

1. Consume a variety of well-respected news sources. In general, for national political news I recommend *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *National Public Radio*. Instructions for accessing subscription services through Mason are below.
2. Avoid television news altogether, except on election night.
3. Avoid getting your news exclusively from social media.
4. Avoid news sources that seek to provoke an emotional response. Try to consume news *dispassionately*. It's okay to have passion about politics, rights, justice, issues, etc; but, try to consume news with a sense of curiosity, rather than an urge to be outraged, touched, or emotive. Train yourself to read a headline and response with, "Huh, that's interesting," rather than automatically clicking forward, like, retweet, etc.
5. Generally, read news in formats that offer content longer than a few sentences.
6. Podcasts are also a great way to keep up with news. Some podcasts I enjoy include *Politics Podcast* (NPR), *Politics (FiveThirtyEight)*, *Checks and Balances* (The Economist), *The Ezra Klein Show* (New York Times), *Political Gabfest* (Slate), *The Daily* (New York Times), *Political Research Digest* (The Niskanen Center).

Instructions for accessing subscription news sources with your Mason login credentials: As a Mason student, your tuition provides you access to dozens of subscription-only news services. You can find a list of some of the best ones, and instructions on how to access them from [this great library source](#). In most cases, you will need to access sources using the Mason [Virtual Private Network](#).

Resources for Students

College can be a stressful experience. It is normal to sometimes feel overwhelmed, out of place, or, insecure. Self-care strategies are important for maintaining your physical, emotional, and academic health. Developing self-awareness about stress, anxiety, or health issues is an important part of your development and success as a student. The following campus resources are available to you to help you learn to manage the complexities of your college:

- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment](#)
- [Compliance, Diversity, Ethics \(including sexual misconduct and harassment; Title IX\)](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#)
- [COVID-19 campus policies, services, and data](#)
- [Disability Student Services](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [International Programs and Services](#)
- [Learning Services](#)
- [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning+ Resources Center](#)
- [Mason Library](#)
- [Math Tutoring Center](#)
- [Military Alliance Program](#)
- [Online Learning Services](#)
- [Student Conduct](#)
- [Student Emergency Assistance Fund](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [University Career Services](#)
- [University Life](#)
- [Writing Center](#)

Required Readings

Reading Load

Completing the assigned readings each week is an essential component of this class. The following advice can help you manage the reading load and make efficient use of your reading time.

Reading Tips

Regardless of whether you are reading something online or hard-copy, if you are reading a borrowed text or something you own, are reading a text you're willing to mark on or not, the following tips will help you retain the information you read and recall it when you want to.

1. Have a notebook that is dedicated to note-taking for this course. Only use this notebook for this course—nothing else goes in it.
2. Start a fresh page of notes for each new item you read.

3. Write the complete citation at the top of page.
4. As you read, write down main ideas, questions, interesting tid-bits, things you'd like to remember, or things you can connect to something else.
5. Every time you write a note, write the page number the note refers to.
6. Try not to write down direct quotes from what you are reading, but if you do, be sure to "put it into quotation marks" so you know the note is not your own words. This habit will help you from committing incidental plagiarism. Refer to your notes with confidence that any note not in quotation marks are your own words.
7. Consider using different colored pens for different kinds of notes. For example, you might use *black* ink for quotations, *red* ink for questions, *blue* ink for your own thoughts, summaries, and ideas, and *green* ink for references to other texts.
8. You may or may not want to highlight your text, or make notes in the margins. Regardless of whether you make in-text marks, your notes in your notebook should always be your primary source of personal reference for your reading.
9. Use the following questions to help you focus your attention about a complete piece of research:
 - (a) What is the main question the author is asking?
 - (b) What motivates the question? Why is it important?
 - (c) What is the primary expectation, hypothesis, or claim the author seeks to evaluate?
 - (d) On what theory or logic is the expectation based?
 - (e) What methods of investigation has the author used to evaluate the claim?
 - (f) What are the primary findings? Were the expectations met?
 - (g) How does this research advance, or contribute to, our knowledge of this topic?

Texts

The following are required texts for the course.

1. Leighley, Jan E. and Nagler, Jonathan. 2013. *Who Votes Now?* Princeton University Press.
2. Llaudet, Elena, and Kosuke Imai. 2023. *Data Analysis for Social Science: A Friendly and Practical Introduction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Class Schedule

Week 01: Jan. 23 and 25

Course Introduction

Read *all* associated documents on course website.

- [Complete "Basic Human Subjects Course"](#) (submit certificate on BB)
- [Install R and R-studio](#)
- [Writing Tips](#)
- [Study Tips](#)
- [APSA Citation Style Guide](#)
- [Zotero guide](#)

Week 02: Jan. 30 and Feb. 1
Voting in the U.S.

Reading Assignments

1. Leighley and Nagler, Chs. 1 & 2

Lab – Intro to R

1. Llaudet & Imai, 1.0 - 1.6 (pp. 1 - 14)

Week 03: Feb. 6 and 8
Models of Turnout

Reading Assignments

1. Leighley and Nagler, Ch. 3
2. Rolfe, Meredith, and Stephanie Chan. 2017. "Voting and Political Participation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks*, edited by Jennifer Nicoll Victor, Alexander H. Montgomery, and Mark Lubell. Oxford University Press. [AVAILABLE FROM GMU LIBRARY]
3. Bond, Robert M., Christopher J. Fariss, Jason J. Jones, Adam D. I. Kramer, Cameron Marlow, Jaime E. Settle, and James H. Fowler. 2012. "A 61—million—person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization." *Nature* (London) 489 (7415): 295–98.

Lab – Summary statistics

1. Llaudet & Imai, 1.7 - 1.10 (pp. 14 - 26)

Week 04: Feb. 13 and 15
Experiments**DUE: Research Introduction (100 - 250 words), Feb. 15.**

Reading Assignments

1. Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science." *The American Political Science Review* 100 (4): 627–35.
2. Diaz, Gustavo, Christopher Grady, and James H. Kuklinski. 2022. "Survey Experiments and the Quest for Valid Interpretation." In *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*, by pages 1036-1052. 55 City Road: SAGE Publications Ltd.
3. Sinclair, Betsy. 2022. "Field Experiments on the Frontier: Designing Better." In *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*, by pages 999-1006. 55 City Road: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Lab – Causal inference

1. Llaudet & Imai, 2.0 - 2.4 (pp. 27 - 38)

Week 05: Feb. 20 and 22

Rules Matter

DUE: Annotated bibliography (4 - 8 sources), Feb. 22.

Reading Assignments

1. Leighley and Nagler, Ch. 4
2. Fraga, Bernard L., and Michael G. Miller. 2022. "Who Do Voter ID Laws Keep from Voting?" *The Journal of Politics* 84 (2).
3. Barber, Michael, and John B. Holbein. 2022. "400 Million Voting Records Show Profound Racial and Geographic Disparities in Voter Turnout in the United States." *PLOS ONE* 17 (6): e0268134.

Lab – Difference-in-means

1. Llaudet & Imai, 2.5 - 2.6 (pp. 39 - 50)

Week 06: Feb. 27 and Mar. 1

Perceptions and Policy

DUE: Background/literature review/theory (200 - 500 words), Mar. 1

Reading Assignments

1. Leighley and Nagler, Ch. 5
2. Arceneaux, Kevin, and David W. Nickerson. 2009. "Who Is Mobilized to Vote A Re-Analysis of 11 Field Experiments." *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (1): 1–16.

Lab – Visualization introduction

1. Chang, Winston. 2022 *R Graphics Cookbook*, 2nd Edition., **Chs. 1 & 2** <https://r-graphics.org>

Week 07: Mar. 6 and 8

MIDTERM EXAM

Monday: Catch-up and review

Wednesday: In-class midterm exam

Week 08, Mar. 13 and 15

SPRING BREAK

Week 09, Mar. 20 and 22:

Racial Justice

DUE: Research design, descriptive statistics (200 - 300 words), Mar. 22

Reading Assignments

1. Philpot, Tasha S., Daron R. Shaw, and Ernest B. McGowen. 2009. "Winning the Race: Black Voter Turnout in the 2008 Presidential Election." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (5): 995–1022.

Lab – Visualization, Bar Graphs and Box Plots

1. Chang, Winston. 2022 *R Graphics Cookbook*, 2nd Edition., **Chs. 3 & 6** <https://r-graphics.org>

Week 10, Mar. 27 and 29

Representativeness

Reading Assignments

1. Leighley and Nagler, Ch. 6
2. Costa, Mia. 2021. "Ideology, Not Affect: What Americans Want from Political Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (2): 342–58.

Lab – Confidence intervals

1. Llaudet & Imai, 7.0 - 7.2.2 (pp. 196 - 208)

Week 11, Apr. 3 and 5

Place and geography

DUE: Hypothesis tests, visualizations, analysis (300 - 400 words), Apr. 5

Reading Assignments

1. Panagopoulos, Costas, Jan E. Leighley, and Brian T. Hamel. 2017. "Are Voters Mobilized by a 'Friend-and-Neighbor' on the Ballot? Evidence from a Field Experiment." *Political Behavior* 39 (4): 865–82.

Lab – Hypothesis testing

1. Llaudet & Imai, 7.3 - 7.3.1 (pp. 211 - 220)

Week 12, Apr. 10 and 12

The role of candidates and campaigns

Reading Assignments

1. Pomante, Michael J., and Scot Schraufnagel. 2015. "Candidate Age and Youth Voter Turnout." *American Politics Research* 43 (3): 479–503.
2. Sides, John, Lynn Vavreck, and Christopher Warshaw. 2022. "The Effect of Television Advertising in United States Elections." *American Political Science Review* 116 (2): 702–18.

Lab – Causal inference reprise

1. Llaudet & Imai, 5.5 - 5.5.4 (pp. 153 - 156)

Week 13, Apr. 17 and 19

Voting is Social

DUE: Complete poster, Apr. 18

Reading Assignments

1. McClurg, Scott D. 2006. "The Electoral Relevance of Political Talk: Examining Disagreement and Expertise Effects in Social Networks on Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3): 737–54.

2. Nickerson, David W. 2008. “Is Voting Contagious? Evidence from Two Field Experiments.” *The American Political Science Review* 102 (1): 49–57.

OPTIONAL Advanced Lab – Linear regression

1. Llaudet & Imai, 4.0 - 4.3 (pp. 98 - 107); 5.0 - 5.3.1 (pp. 129 - 141)

Week 14, Apr. 24 and 26
Polarization and Voting

Reading Assignments

1. Klar, Samara, Yanna Krupnikov, and John Barry Ryan. 2018. “Affective Polarization or Partisan Disdain?” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82 (2): 379–90.

OPTIONAL Advanced Lab – Hypothesis testing with regression

1. Llaudet & Imai, 7.3.2 - 7.5 (pp. 220 - 225)

Week 15, May 1 and 3
Gender and reforms

Reading Assignments

1. Teele, Dawn Langan, Joshua Kalla, and Frances Rosenbluth. 2018. “The Ties That Double Bind: Social Roles and Women’s Underrepresentation in Politics.” *The American Political Science Review* 112 (3): 525–41.
2. Wolbrecht, Christina, and Kevin J. Corder. 2020. “Predicting How Women Will Vote Requires Looking beyond Gender Alone.” *Newsweek*. January 30, 2020. [LINK](#)

Lab

Review

FINAL EXAM, May 15

10:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.