

Independent Study Research Workshop: Electoral Accountability & Forecasting in the United States

CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

Fall 2023

Independent Study Meetings: 1:00-3:50pm (Tuesdays)

Course Location: McManus Conference Room & Zoom Room

[<https://cgu.zoom.us/j/82483050716>]

Instructor: Carlos Algara, Ph.D.

Office: 227 McManus Hall

In-Person Office Hours: Mondays, 8:00AM-9:00AM (PST) & 12:00PM-1:00PM (PST)

Virtual Office Hours: By appointment

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Independent Study Course Description

This course is a graduate research workshop surveying the theoretical and empirical literature underpinning broad scholarly inquiry on (1) how political elites (i.e., parties, institutions, individual politicians) provide representation to the citizens that elected them and (2) how citizens engage in holding these political elites accountable at the ballot box.

This course will culminate in a course group research project that focuses on developing a forecasting model predicting outcome of the upcoming 2024 U.S. elections. The goal of this course project will be to produce a class co-authored manuscript submitted for consideration to the “Special Issue on Forecasting the 2024 US Elections” solicited by the American Political Science Association (APSA) journal *PS: Political Science & Politics* due next summer¹.

This course is a requirement for students in the American Politics subfield and can meet one of the required (limited) electives for students in the Comparative Politics Subfield.

The goal of this course is to give students the tools they need to sharpen their own social science research skills within a research workshop framework. This course is ideal for both beginning and advanced students, as we will both survey the rich literature on American representation and elections while also being accustomed to datasets and methods used by scholars conducting research in this area such as the American National Election Study (ANES), Cooperative Election Study (CES), and official “real world” election results (state, county, congressional district) going back since the Civil War.

By first evaluating the principal-agent relationship that structures representation and elections

¹APSA call for papers can be found here: <https://apsanet.org/PUBLICATIONS/Journals/PS-Political-Science-Politics/Calls-for-Papers2024>

within the American democratic system, this course speaks to the linkage between what constituents “want” (or claim to “want”) and the actions undertaken by their elected political elites. The basic question assessed in this course is a simple, yet complex one, “ *how well do American political elites represent the views of their constituents and are they punished, or rewarded, for the representation they provide?*”

Independent Study Course Disclaimer

This is an Independent Study course. The student must engage in rigorous readings, discussion, collaborative work, and meet during agreed upon intervals. Note that this course is a research workshop where, together, we will engage in a collaborative project throughout the academic semester which includes reviewing literature, specifying a forecasting model, and writing the manuscript.

Course Logistics & Requirements

This section of the syllabus serves as a guide for course expectations (both for me and for you) and logistical information such as grade breakdown and course texts.

Course Texts, Materials, & Announcements: Given that this is an independent study course, the student is responsible for tracking down the forthcoming readings.

Grade Breakdown & Schedule:

- ★ 30% Course Engagement
- ★ 30% Session Synthesis Papers
- ★ 40% Final Paper Contribution

Class Discussion Participation (30%): As a graduate-level independent study, this course requires students to attend class and be active in our collective course discussion. Ideally, I would be speaking very little during most of our seminars. As such, students are expected to shoulder the burden of driving discussions in this course. This means that students need to read the assigned materials every week and be ready to talk about the substantive topics/work discussed in that week’s readings.

Session Synthesis Papers (30%): By noon the day before our synchronous period together, the student must prepare a brief, informal response to that week’s readings and post it to Canvas. These responses can be as little as 150 words and no more than 400 words and can adopt any format: drawing connections between readings, critiquing them, or articulating questions. They will not be graded on content or prose, but may be referenced during class. discussion-period.

If you have concerns, please contact an instructor early in the semester. Note that this is only required from Meeting 2-11

Final Paper Contribution (40%): Given that this is an independent study research workshop, students will be required to assist with the collaborative project throughout the course of the semester and at the conclusion. Further details about this paper contribution will be shared throughout the semester.

Claremont Graduate University Course Grading Scheme

Letter Grade Grade	Grade Point	Grade Description	Learning Outcome
A	4.0	<i>Complete mastery of course material and additional insight beyond course material</i>	<i>Insightful</i>
B	3.0	<i>Complete mastery of course material</i>	<i>Proficient</i>
C	2.0	<i>Gaps in mastery of course material; not at level expected by the program</i>	<i>Developing</i>
U	0	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>

Note that grades may contain pluses or minus designations as appropriate.

Course Attendance, Ethics, & Accommodations

Course Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes. Students who are unable to attend class must seek permission for an excused absence from the course director or teaching assistant. Unapproved absences or late attendance for three or more classes may result in a lower grade or an “incomplete” for the course. If a student has to miss a class, he or she should arrange to get notes from a fellow student and is strongly encouraged to meet with the teaching assistant to obtain the missed material. Missed assignments will not be available for re-taking unless *prior arrangements are made with the course instructor*.

Academic Dishonesty & Ethics: This course is about developing critical thought and developing personalized skill-sets necessary to examine politics in a systematic and rigorous way. Thus, it is important to develop your own arguments and work to hone in analytical skills. Academic dishonesty is not only a serious breach of ethics in the university community, but it is also detrimental to your scholarly growth. Ethics breaches, such as cheating and plagiarism, will be referred to appropriate avenues. Students may refer to the [University’s Academic Integrity Archived Bulletin](#) for further clarification or may contact the instructor for any specific questions.

Course Accommodations: Claremont Graduate University is committed to offering auxiliary aids and services to students with verifiable disabilities, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To ensure that their individual needs are addressed, students with special needs are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office as early as possible. Additional resources can be found on the linked page: [CGU Disability Services](#).

CGU Mental Health Resources: The Claremont Colleges Monsour Counseling & Psychological Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information, please see: <https://services.claremont.edu/mcaps/>.

Course Expectations & Structure

Students are expected to complete all readings, to view asynchronous lecture materials, and to participate in the synchronous period together. A majority of a student’s grade will be determined by their writing assignments, and those will be held to a high standard. They will be graded on clarity of writing, accurate and thoughtful employment of supporting evidence, relevance to content covered during the course, and degree to which they satisfy their specific form. Late assignments will be penalized 10%.

The course is organized in four sections. First it introduces the basic building blocks of research design. Second, we explore the building blocks literature of the salient models of electoral choice that predominate political science. Note that this is a very introductory treatment. Third, we

explore the structure of papers that underpin election forecasting in political science through a sample of past special symposium papers. Lastly, we will engage in the “workshop” component of the course where we discuss what a “new” model of election forecasting could contribute to the standing literature and make for a potential submission to the APSA special issue.

Course Road-Map

1. Meeting 1 (8/29/2023): No course material due to the 2023 APSA Annual Meeting, please review the independent study syllabus.

Introduction to Quantitative Research Design

2. Meeting 2 (9/5/2023): What is the intuition separating causal and correlational designs and why is this an important distinction? In this meeting, we will review the intuition of research design by focusing on the fundamental differences between correlational and causal research designs. In particular, we will pay close attention to the fundamental problem of causal inference and the logic of counterfactuals in research design.

- ★ Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan & Anthony Fowler. 2021. “Thinking Clearly with Data.” Princeton University Press.

- Chapter 1: Thinking Clearly in a Data-Driven Age
- Chapter 2: Correlation: What Is It and What Is It Good For?
- Chapter 3: Causation: What Is It and What Is It Good For?

3. Meeting 3 (9/12/2023): How do we use regression to establish relationships and predict outcomes? In this meeting, we will get a *broad overview* of linear regression and how to use this method to both estimate relationships of interest and predict outcomes.

- ★ Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan & Anthony Fowler. 2021. “Thinking Clearly with Data.” Princeton University Press.

- Chapter 4: Correlation Requires Variation
- Chapter 5: Regression for Describing and Forecasting
- Chapter 6: Samples, Uncertainty, and Statistical Inference

- ★ Llaudet, Elena & Kosuke Imai. 2022. “Data Analysis for Social Science: A Friendly and Practical Introduction.” Princeton University Press.

- Chapter 4: Predicting Outcomes Using Linear Regression
- Chapter 5: Estimating Causal Effects with Observational Data

Basic Models of Electoral Choice: Individual-Level Models

4. Meeting 4 (9/19/2023): Why democratic Representation, in dyadic and collective terms? Madisonian Democracy & The Integral Role of Policy in Dyadic Representation

- ★ Madison, James. 1787. “Federalist 10.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)

- ★ Madison, James (or Alexander Hamilton). 1788. “Federalist 51.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
 - ★ Mansbridge, Jane. 2003. “Rethinking Representation?” *The American Political Science Review* 97(4):515-528.
 - ★ “Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties.” 1950. *The American Political Science Review* 44(3), 1-96.
 - ★ Wickham-Jones, Mark. 2018. “This 1950 political science report keeps popping up in the news. Here’s the story behind it.” In [The Washington Post: Monkey Cage](#).
 - ★ Urbinati, Nadia & Mark E. Warren. 2008. “The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11(1):387–412.
 - ★ Manin, Bernard, Adam Przeworski, & Susan Carol Stokes. 1999. “Elections and representation.” In Adam Przeworski, Susan Carol Stokes, and Bernard Manin (Eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation* (pp.29-55). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
 - ★ Ansolabehere, Stephen, & Philip E. Jones. 2011. “Dyadic Representation.” In George C. Edwards III, Frances E. Lee, & Eric Shickler (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress* (pp. 293–314). Oxford University Press.
5. Meeting 5 (9/26/2023): Do voters care about the intrinsic personal qualities of their representatives? Evaluating the “valence” model of representation and when voters are forced to make a choice between “good policy” and “good valence” representation.
- ★ Buttice, Matthew K., & Walter J. Stone. 2012. “Candidates Matter: Policy and Quality Differences in Congressional Elections.” *The Journal of Politics* 74(3): 870–887.
 - ★ Stone, Walter J., & Elizabeth N. Simas. 2010. “Candidate Valence and Ideological Positions in U.S. House Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2): 371–388.
 - ★ Stokes, Donald E. 1963. “Spatial Models of Party Competition.” *American Political Science Review* 57(2): 368–377.
 - ★ Goren, Paul. 2002. “Character Weakness, Partisan Bias, and Presidential Evaluation.” *The Journal of Politics* 46(3): 627-641.
 - ★ Butler, Daniel M., & Eleanor N. Powell. 2014. “Understanding the Party Brand: Experimental Evidence on the Role of Valence.” *The Journal of Politics* 76(2): 492–505.
 - ★ Mondak, Jeffery J. 1995. “Competence, Integrity, and the Electoral Success of Congressional Incumbents.” *The Journal of Politics* 57(4): 1043-1069.
6. Meeting 6 (10/3/2023): The role of retrospective evaluations in shaping representation: do voters hold representatives accountable for their performance in office and are they up to the task to “operate the instrument of democracy?”

- ★ Healy, Andrew, & Neil Malhotra. 2010. "Random events, economic losses, and retrospective voting: Implications for democratic competence." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 5(2): 193-208.
- ★ Huber, Gregory A., Seth J. Hill, & Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. "Sources of bias in retrospective decision making: Experimental evidence on voters' limitations in controlling incumbents." *American Political Science Review* 106(4): 720-741.
- ★ Amlani, Sharif, Samuel Collitt, Sara Kazemian, & Carlos Algara. 2021. "The Severity of COVID-19 & Republican Party Fortunes in the 2020 Elections: The Semblance of a Down-Ballot Presidential Spillover." *Working paper currently under peer-review*.
- ★ Anderson, Christopher J. 2007. "The End of Economic Voting? Contingency Dilemmas and the Limits of Democratic Accountability." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10(1): 271-296.
- ★ Garz, Marcel & Gregory J. Martin. 2020. "Media Influence on Vote Choices: Unemployment News and Incumbents' Electoral Prospects." *American Journal of Political Science*. 65(2): 278-293.

7. Week 7 (10/10/2023): Party government through a representational lens: how parties engage in collective representation and shape institutional representation in the electoral arena.

- ★ Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver. 1989. "Political Parties, Public Opinion, and State Policy in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 83(3): 729-750.
- ★ Caughey, Devin & Christopher Warshaw. 2018. "Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936-2014." *American Political Science Review* 112(2): 249-266.
- ★ Algara, Carlos. 2021. "Congressional Approval and Responsible Party Government: The Role of Partisanship and Ideology in Citizen Assessments of the Contemporary U.S. Congress." *Political Behavior*.
- ★ Coleman, John J. 1999. "Unified government, divided government, and party responsiveness." *American Political Science Review* 93(4): 821-835.
- ★ Caughey, Devin, Christopher Warshaw, & Yiqing Xu. 2017. "Incremental democracy: The policy effects of partisan control of state government." *The Journal of Politics* 79(4): 1342-1358.
- ★ Caughey, Devin. 2014. "Representation without Parties: Reconsidering the One-Party South." *Working Paper*.²

²Note that this working manuscript is a precursor to a larger book of the same title published by Princeton University Press.

Assessing the Presidential Forecast Models

8. Meeting 8 (10/17/2023): Forecasting Special Issue: Early Forecasting Models During the 2004 Presidential Election

- ★ Campbell, James E. 2004. "Introduction—The 2004 Presidential Election Forecasts." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 733-735.
- ★ Norpoth, Helmut. 2004. "From Primary to General Election: A Forecast of the Presidential Vote." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 737-740.
- ★ Lockerbie, Brad. 2004. "A Look to the Future: Forecasting the 2004 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 741-743.
- ★ Abramowitz, Alan I. 2004. "When Good Forecasts Go Bad: The Time-for-Change Model and the 2004 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 745-746.
- ★ Wlezien, Christopher & Robert S. Erikson. 2004. "The Fundamentals, the Polls, and the Presidential Vote." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 747-751.
- ★ Lewis-Beck, Michael S. & Charles Tien. 2004. "Jobs and the Job of President: A Forecast for 2004." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 753-758.
- ★ Holbrook, Thomas M. 2004. "Good News for Bush? Economic News, Personal Finances, and the 2004 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 759-761.
- ★ Campbell, James E. 2004. "Forecasting the Presidential Vote in 2004: Placing Preference Polls in Context." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 763-767.

9. Meeting 9 (10/24/2023): Early Examples of Congressional Forecasting Models

- ★ Tuftes, Edward R. 1975. "Determinants of the Outcomes of Midterm Congressional Elections." *American Political Science Review* 69(3): 812-826.
- ★ Bardwell, Kedron & Michael S. Lewis-Beck. 2004. "State-Level Forecasts of U.S. Senate Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 821-826.
- ★ Klarner, Carl & Stan Buchanan. 2006. "Forecasting the 2006 Elections for the United States Senate." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(4): 849-855.
- ★ Klarner, Carl & Stan Buchanan. 2006. "Forecasting the 2006 Elections for the U.S. House of Representatives." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(4): 857-861.
- ★ Abramowitz, Alan I. 2006. "National Conditions, Strategic Politicians, and U.S. Congressional Elections: Using the Generic Vote to Forecast the 2006 House and Senate Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(4): 863-866.

10. Meeting 10 (10/31/2023): Contemporary Midterm Election Forecasting Models, The Case of 2014 & 2018

- ★ Abramowitz, Alan I. 2022. "The Generic Ballot Model and the 2022 Midterm Election." *Polity* 55(3): 633-637.
- ★ Bafumi, Joseph, Robert S. Erickson, & Christopher Wlezien. 2010. "Forecasting House Seats from Generic Congressional Polls: The 2010 Midterm Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 43(4): 633-636.
- ★ Campbell, James E. 2014. "The 2014 Midterm Election Forecasts." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(4): 769-771.
- ★ Campbell, James E. 2018. "Introduction: Forecasting the 2018 US Midterm Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(S1): 1-3.
- ★ Abramowitz, Alan I. 2014. "Forecasting the 2014 Midterm Elections with the Generic Ballot Model." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(4): 772-774.
- ★ Abramowitz, Alan I. 2018. "Will Democrats Catch a Wave? The Generic Ballot Model & The 2018 US House Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(S1): 4-6.
- ★ Bafumi, Joseph, Robert S. Erikson, & Christopher Wlezien. 2014. "Forecasting the 2014 Midterm Elections with the Generic Ballot Model." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(4): 775-778.
- ★ Bafumi, Joseph, Robert S. Erikson, & Christopher Wlezien. 2018. "Forecasting the 2018 Midterm Election using National Polls & District Information." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(S1): 7-11.

Skim Articles Below:

- ★ Campbell, James E. 2014. "The Seats-in-Trouble Forecast of the 2014 Midterm Congressional Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(4): 779-781.
- ★ Campbell, James E. 2018. "The Seats-in-Trouble Forecast of the 2018 Midterm Congressional Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(S1): 12-16.
- ★ Lewis-Beck, Michael S. & Charles Tien. 2014. "Congressional Election Forecasting: Structure-X Models for 2014." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(4): 782-785.
- ★ Lewis-Beck, Michael S. & Charles Tien. 2018. "House Forecasts: Structure-X Models for 2018." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(S1): 17-20.
- ★ Highton, Benjamin, Eric McGhee & John Sides. 2014. "Election Fundamentals and Polls Favor the Republicans." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(4): 786-788.

- ★ Klarner, Carl E. 2018. "2018 State Legislative Forecasts." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(S1): 21-27.

11. Meeting 11 (11/6/2023): The Recent Presidential Election Special Symposium

- ★ Dassonneville, Ruth & Charles Tien. 2020. "Introduction to Forecasting the 2020 U.S. Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 47-51.
- ★ Abramowitz, Alan I. 2020. "It's the Pandemic Stupid! A Simplified Model for Forecasting the 2020 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 52-54.
- ★ Erikson, Robert S. & Christopher Wlezien. 2020. "Forecasting the 2020 Presidential Election: Leading Economic Indicators, Polls, and the Vote." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 55-58.
- ★ Lewis-Beck, Michael S. & Charles Tien. 2020. "The Political Economy Model: A Blue Wave Forecast For 2020." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 59-62.
- ★ Norpoth, Helmut. 2020. "Primary Model Predicts Trump Reelection." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 63-66.
- ★ Lockerbie, Brad. 2020. "Economic Pessimism and Political Punishment in 2020" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 67-69.
- ★ Graefe, Andreas. 2020. "Of Issues and Leaders: Forecasting the 2020 US Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 70-72..

Skim Articles Below:

- ★ DeSart, Jay. 2020. "A Long-Range State-Level Forecast of the 2020 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 73-76.
- ★ Jerome, Bruno, Veronique Jerome, Philippe Mongrain & Richard Nadeau. 2020. "State-Level Forecasts for the 2020 US Presidential Election: Tough Victory Ahead for Biden." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 77-80.
- ★ Enns, Peter K. & Julius Lagodny. 2020. "Forecasting the 2020 Electoral College Winner: The State Presidential Approval/State Economy Model." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 81-85.
- ★ Gruca, Thomas S. & Thomas A. Rietz. 2020. "The 2020 (Re)Election According to the Iowa Electronic Markets: Politics, Pandemic, Recession, and/or Protests?" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 86-90.
- ★ Murr, Andreas & Michael Lewis-Beck. 2020. "Citizen Forecasting 2020: A State-by-State Experiment." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 91-95.

- ★ Armstrong, J. Scott & Andreas Graefe. 2020. "The PollyVote Popular Vote Forecast for the 2020 US Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 96-98.
- ★ Cuzan, Alfred G. 2020. "The Campbell Collection of Presidential Election Forecasts, 1984–2016: A Review." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 99-103.
- ★ Dowding, Keith. 2020. "Why Forecast? The Value of Forecasting to Political Science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 104-106.
- ★ Victor, Jennifer Nicoll. 2020. "Let's Be Honest about Election Forecasting." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54(1): 107-110.

12. Meeting 12: Brainstorming an Election Forecasting Model

- ★ No readings, please come prepared to sketch out an election model during our scheduled meeting time.

13. Week 13, 14, & 15 Workshop Component Consisting of Data Collection, Forecasting Model Analysis, & Writing the Manuscript (will meet as needed)

This syllabus was last updated on: September 4, 2023