PS4990-6990 Spring 2020
State Election Politics and Policy
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Dr. Lia Merivaki
Office: 189 Bowen Hall
Email: lia.merivaki@pspa.msstate.edu
MWF 9:00am-9:50am, Room: MCCOOL 113   Office Hours: MW 12:00-1:30pm

Course description:
In the United States, the conduct of elections constitutes a state-run affair, with the occasional oversight from Congress, the Courts, and the Department of Justice. States have traditionally regulated access to the voting process, which led to a rather diverse set of institutional and administrative practices with a non-uniform impact on voter participation, representation, and equality. Given this diversity across the states, one important question arises: Does **the voter experience** vary depending where a voter resides, and if yes, why would some states make electoral participation more accessible than others?

In this class, students will be exposed to the fundamental challenge of state election policy, namely **access vs. integrity**, and learn about the various implications of this challenge in reforming elections, from regulating access to voter registration and turnout, drawing electoral districts, improving voting technology, to successfully counting votes. We will identify the key actors involved in adopting, implementing, and evaluating election reforms, and discuss the growing role of the courts in frequently restricting the states' regulation of the electoral process.

Learning Outcomes:
- By the end of this class, students will be able to evaluate states' efforts to adopt election policies by empirically assessing the impact of these reforms on citizen participation and representation, as well as the states' performance in elections.
- They will be able to get an understanding of the challenges in implementing election reforms at the local level, by interacting directly with local election officials, practitioners, and advocacy groups.
- Students will learn how to collect data and build a cross-national dataset of state election policies across the 50 states plus D.C.
- Students will learn how to critically evaluate empirical research and strengthen their academic writing by engaging in peer review.
- *Seniors and graduate students who are planning on applying to graduate school or any academic/policy position, or anyone who is interested in applying for a scholarship, will be able to use the materials produced in this class to strengthen their portfolios.*

Required texts:
1. Kropf, Martha, and David C. Kimball. 2017. Helping America Vote: The Limits of Election Reform. Routledge.

- Cheapest options if you purchase by the publisher's website https://www.routledge.com/Helping-America-Vote-The-Limits-of-Election-Reform/Kropf-Kimball/p/book/9780415804080 → paperback or eBook option.

A very good resource to read about the history of voting rights:
Keyssar, Alexander. 2000. The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States. Basic Books.
- Mitchell Library, On Reserve

Supplementary Materials
Supplementary materials (book chapters, scholarly articles and reports, news articles) will be available on Canvas.

Grade Weights

In-Class Participation:	Written Assignments
Engaged Participation 15%	State election laws essays 40%
Research Proposal Presentation 10%	Research Proposal Draft 1 10%
Syllabus Assignment: 5%	Research Proposal Final 20%
	*Elections Glossary and Guide to Elections in Mississippi 30%

*Opportunities for professional development (& extra credit); *details TBD*
- "Democracy In Action Legislative Advocacy Day", Jackson State Capitol
  - Advocacy Day organized by Mississippi Votes
    - February 24; March 20; March 31 (attendance only in groups; pick date)
- Youth Leadership Summit at Mississippi State University
  - Friday, April 3 @ the Mill

Grade Policy:
100-90=A; 89-80=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; 59- =F
For details on MSU grading policy, see MSU Grades and Quality Points.
Incomplete Policy: An "I" grade indicates incomplete coursework and may be awarded to an undergraduate student only when a small portion of the student's work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade.
S-U Policy: S-U contracts must be negotiated in writing within the first three days of the term.

Guidelines for written assignments
For the written assignments, you are expected to utilize the readings assigned, as well as take advantage of outside sources if needed. Wikipedia is not a reliable source, so refrain from using it. **In-text citations, as well as list of references are required. Points will be deducted for format.**
Written Assignments must be within the required word limit, **1.5-spaced, 12-point font Times New Roman, with page numbers in the bottom and word count**, **APSA reference style**, submitted by the designated deadlines. You must include citations if you are using outside

sources. Keep in mind that every written submission goes through Turnitin for plagiarism. *Any plagiarized, or self-plagiarized work will be submitted to the University for Disciplinary Review.* Please be consistent in the format of your essays.
How-to-write a paper advice from MSU library.

Resources for Students
- Google Scholar
- MSU Library
- The Writing Center
- The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
- Ballotpedia
- https://electionline.org/ @electionline
- Election Assistance Commission. Follow @EACgov

Tips for writing in Political Science:
1. Clear structure: Introduction and thesis statement, main argument and evidence, concluding remarks and implications for policy
2. In-text citations for academic references
3. Footnotes for online resources (news articles, governmental reports)
4. Avoid using dictionary definitions ("Merriam-Webster defines 'democracy' as…")
5. Critically evaluate academic and non-academic resources (see critical thinking guide)
6. **Use evidence to support your arguments**
7. Consistency in format and citation style
8. Substantive conclusion (do NOT repeat introduction)
9. List of references

Course Requirements
Engaged participation: The success of this class is heavily dependent on your active engagement and contribution to class discussions. You are expected to attend class meetings and be prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course materials. Note that your physical presence in the classroom (attendance) **does not** equal active participation.
*Unless denoted as "recommended"/ "optional", you are expected to cover ALL assigned materials.

Perfect attendance guarantees you a 0 for participation. I will differentiate between A (9-10), B (7-8), and C (6) grades based on how actively, respectfully and thoughtfully you contribute to class and group discussions/work.
● Excellent: Student arrives fully prepared with notes on readings, observations and questions. S/he demonstrates enthusiasm about the subject, listens carefully and respectfully and shares events/news articles that are relevant for the theme of the day. His/her understanding goes beyond the assigned texts in such a way that s/he challenges the commonly held assumptions, offers relevant, meaningful and different perspectives AND encourages his/her peers to think critically about the issues/scholars discussed in the class.

● Appropriate: Student raises questions about the readings and topics under discussion. His/her comments are relevant and reflect the understanding of the texts, previous remarks by other students and insights about the assigned material. S/he actively participates at appropriate times in a way to move conversation forward AND shows respect for his/her peers and their arguments rather than dominating the class discussion.

● Fair: Student sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation. S/he usually offers comments, but sometimes they indicate lack of attention to previous remarks or draw unclear conclusions. Other times student is "tuned out" OR displays lack of interest in the material.

● Poor: Student projects lack of interest and/or disrespect for others OR exhibits little evidence of having read or thought about assigned material. S/he seldom participates (or his/her remarks do not advance the conversation) AND/OR is generally not engaged.

Recommended news sources: **electionline.org; Mississippi Today, The Clarion-Ledger,** and any other news source that explicitly discusses election laws.

Syllabus Assignment: By the end of Week 1, you are to review the course syllabus and create a "Guide to State Election Policy and Politics Syllabus". This assignment has no word limit or format guide. You are to create a guide for yourself and your peers, and include the information you determine is necessary for students to know so that they can succeed in class. I will allow students to vote on the most useful designs on Canvas.

State election laws essays: Throughout the course of the semester, you are to do four (4) essays on topics/state election laws of your choice (you will pick the topics on Week 2 from the schedule). The 1st topic will be completed by everyone.
 *I will allow only one (1) substitution ONLY in the event of a health or family issue that won't allow the student to complete an essay.

These essays have three components:
1. Data collection: For the topic/state election policy of your choice, you are first to collect information (data) on which states have the policy or not. We will start on the data collection in class so that students get an idea of the data collection process. Your most useful resource is the National Conference for State Legislatures' website, ncsl.org.
2. Annotated bibliography: The writing part of the assignment consists of an annotated bibliography of that week's reading materials, and students are required to find up to two (2) additional materials, preferably peer-reviewed articles.
3. Research Questions: The last part of the writing assignment will include a brief analysis of the collected data (how many states have X policy vs. how many do not), and 2 research questions which you will derive from the reviewed articles. These questions may be a variation of the questions asked in the reviewed articles, or questions that authors do not address in the research you reviewed.

Essays will be between 700-900 words, in Times New Roman, 12-point font, 1.5 spaced. **You will use APSA's Style Manual**, for writing, in-text citations and list of references. Free APSA Citation Generator.

*Make sure the submission is in a Word document. Canvas won't open text or any other formats.

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Research proposal; Draft 1 and Final Submission: The purpose of the research proposal is to identify one empirical question and propose a research project to study it. The question in our context is assessing/evaluating the impact of adopting or amending an election reform on the voting experience, broadly defined. Your research will have implications about adopting such reforms in Mississippi, which is one of the states with the highest costs of voting.
The final research proposal incorporates the literature review, which you are expected to update after your peers' and my comments, and supplement with at least 2 academic resources relevant to the reform you are studying as studied across the United States, or any other state.

We will devote a week in class to discuss research ideas and how to put together a research proposal. By that time, you will ideally have written at least 2 written assignments and will have a good idea of the literature on state election policy to think about a research topic.

To improve your academic writing skills, you are to first submit a complete draft (Draft 1), which will be reviewed by your peers. Between the draft submission and the date the revised proposal is due you will present your proposal in class and will receive feedback during the peer review session. So you will have enough feedback to appropriately revise your proposal.

The proposal should cover the following: a) the key questions/themes the literature covers b) the main findings of existing research and whether there is consensus or conflicting evidence among researchers c) the question that you are interested in studying and why it merits studying d) how will you go about studying it?

Research proposals should be between **1,300-1,650 words** (up to 5.2 pages, which includes the literature review) in Times-New Roman, 12-point font, 1.5-spaced, with page numbers and word limit. **You will use APSA's Style Manual**, for writing, in-text citations and list of references. Free APSA Citation Generator.

Research proposal presentation: During Weeks 14-15, you will present an outline of your research proposal. The presentation, in Powerpoint form, will be about 5-6 slides long and each slide will address points a) - d) as described above.
We will discuss about research design and data sources in class during Week 9.

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*Elections Glossary and Guide to Mississippi Elections: This is an alternative assignment as a substitute to the research proposal. Students opting for this assignment are to create a comprehensive glossary of election terms. The glossary will include the term and its definition, along with a list of states where the definition applies/does not apply. Note that such glossary does not officially exist, but researchers and election practitioners are trying to put one together. Aside from the glossary, you are to put together a Guide to Mississippi Elections, where you include any information necessary for prospective and existing voters. More details will be included throughout the semester.

Class Schedule
Part 1. Voting Rights History and the Structure of Elections in the U.S.

Week 1- January 6-10
M. Introduction to the course
W. Why election reform?
- Kropf and Kimball, Ch1 (Available on Canvas)
- Adona, Natalie, and Paul Gronke. 2018. "Understanding the Voter Experience: The Public's View of Election Administration and Reform," Democracy Fund Research report, pp. 1-33.
F. NO CLASS – Syllabus Assignment Online, submit by Sunday January 12 on Canvas

Week 2- January 13-17
M. Voting Rights in a nutshell
- Tokaji, Chs 1-3
W. Reviewing the Literature
- Burden, Barry C. et al. 2014. "Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform," *American Journal of Political Science* 58(1): 95-109.
    - Dr. Hoover Green's Guide on How to Read an Article (Canvas)
    - Annotated Bibliography guide, Msstate libraries
F. The world of Election Sciences; How we collect data
- Li, Pomante and Scraufnagel (2018) "Cost of Voting in the American States," *Election Law Journal* 17(3): 234-247
    - *Focus on the argument and findings, skim the methodology sections*
- Bring your laptops

Week 3- January 20-24
M. MLK Holiday- No Class
W. One Person One Vote
- Short reads on redistricting: ALL REQUIRED
    - "Into the Thicket: A redistricting Starter Kit for Legislative Staff," ncsl.org
        - *Read all tabs on that page*
    - "Redistricting Criteria," ncsl.org
    - Li, Michael, Thomas Wolf and Annie Lo. November 13, 2019. "The State of Redistricting Litigation," Brennan Center for Justice.
- Waldman (2016) *The Fight to Vote* Ch9, pp: 125-140 (Chapter on Canvas)
F. Minority Representation and Political Equality
- Davidson (1992) "The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History," pp. 7-34 (Chapter on Canvas)
- Shelby County v. Holder – Legal Information Institute

Week 4- January 27-31 Conducting Elections at the Federal and State Levels
M. Federal Intervention in Elections

- Hale, Montjoy and Brown (2015) "The Legal Framework of Election Administration in the Modern Era," pp.77-95 (Chapter on Canvas)

W. State Innovation in Elections

- Hale, Montjoy and Brown (2015) "State Innovations in Election Administration" pp. 119-141 (Chapter on Canvas)

F. Running Elections in the United States

- Hale, Montjoy and Brown. 2014. "The Structure of Election Administration at State and Local Levels," pp. 27-51 (Chapter on Canvas)

S. Assignment #1: Annotated Bibliography; state Chief Election Official and Selection method data collection (Ch2 in Hale, Montjoy and Brown 2015) – EVERYONE

Part 2. Election Policy and Politics
Week 5- February 3-7 Voter Registration & Voter ID
M. It's all about Voter Registration

- The NVRA of 1992, U.S. Department of Justice
- Merivaki and Smith (2019) "Challenges in Voter Registration," pp. 59-82 (Chapter on Canvas)
- Merivaki (2018) "What Provisional Ballots Tell Us About the Remaining Challenges in America's Local Voting Systems," Scholars Strategy Network.

W. Voter Identification

- "Variations in Voter Identification Laws," ncsl.org
- Donovan, Todd, and Shaun Bowler. 2016. "Strict voter ID laws make Republican Voters More Confident About Elections." USApp American Politics and Policy Blog, pp: 1-3.
- Gasking, Keesha and Sundeep Iyer. 2012. "The Challenge of Obtaining Voter Identification." Brennan Center for Justice Report. Pp:1-22.

F. Waiting in Line to Vote

- "The 2018 Voting Experience," Bipartisan Policy Center, pp. 4-30
  - Paper has a lot of figures; the reading is not too long

S. Option #2: Annotated Bibliography; state voter id laws or OVR + EDR + AVR (ncsl.org)

- *(Good for biblio)*: Mayer and DeCrescenzo (2017) "Estimating the Effect of Voter ID on Nonvoters in Wisconsin in the 2016 Presidential Election," Elections Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Week 6- February 10-14 Accessible and Convenient Voting
M. The Quality of Polling Locations

- Baretto et al. (2009) "Are All Precincts Created Equal? The Prevalence of Low-Quality Precincts in Low-Income Communities," *Political Research Quarterly* 62(3): 445-458.

W. The politics of adopting election laws
- Biggers and Hanmer (2015) "Who Makes Voting Convenient? Explaining the Adoption of Early and No-Excuse Absentee Voting in the American States," *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 15(2): 192-210.

F. When some voters are left out
- Piner et al. (2011) "The Experience of Accessible Voting: Results of a Survey among Legally Blind Users," pp. 1686-1690.
- Hall (2003) "Public Participation in Election Management: The Case of Language Minority Voters," *American Review of Public Administration* 33(4): 407-422.

S. Option #3: Annotated bibliography; state early voting/absentee laws
- *(Good for biblio)*: Herron, Michael C., and Daniel A. Smith. 2014. "Race, Party and the Consequences of Restricting Early Voting in Florida in the 2012 General Election," *Political Research Quarterly*: 646-665.
- *(Good for biblio)*: Gronke, Paul et al. 2007. "Early Voting and turnout," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40.4: 639-645.

Week 7- February 17-21 Voting Technology
M. Matching the solution to the problem
- Kropf and Kimball, Chs 2-4

W. Voting in 2018
- 2018 Election Administration and Voting Survey, pp. 19-24; 36-38
- "Midterms 2018: Voters face malfunctioning machines and long lines at polls across country on Election Day," nbcnews.com
- Bedillon, Caleb. November 23, 2019. "Paper ballots offer extra election security," Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal.

F. One reform is enough?
- Kropf and Kimball, Chs 5-7

S. Option #4: Annotated bibliography; state 2018 voting technology (EAVS 2018 pp 36-38)
- *(Good for biblio)*: Kimball and Kropf (2005) "Ballot Design and Unrecorded Votes on Paper-Based Ballots," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(4): 508-529.

Week 8- February 24-28 State election performance and voter confidence
M. Evaluating state election performance
- Pew Charitable Trusts: The Election Performance Index and Methodology
    - Election Overview tab
    - EPI Rank tab
    - State Profiles tab
    - Indicators tab
    - Comparison tab

W. The impact of poll workers
- Burden, Barry and Jeffrey Milyo. 2015. "The Quantities and Qualities of Poll Workers," *Election Law Journal* 14.1: 38-46.
- Hall, Thad, J. Quin Monson, and Kelly D. Patterson. 2009. "The Human Dimension of Elections: How Poll Workers Shape Public Confidence in Elections," *Political Research Quarterly* 62.3: 507-522.

F. Cybersecurity
- Schneider (2019) "Election Security: Increasing Election Integrity by Improving Cybersecurity," pp. 243-259.
- Choate and Smith (2019) "Election Cybersecurity," pp. 279-300.

<mark>S. Option #5: Annotated bibliography; number of poll workers per Election Day polling place (EAVS 2018 pp 8)</mark>
   - *(Good for biblio)*: Hall, Monson and Patterson (2008) "The Human Dimension of Elections: How Poll Workers Shape Public Confidence in Elections," *Political Research Quarterly*
   - Atkeson, Lonna, et al. 2014. "Who Asks for Voter Identification? Explaining Poll-Worker Discretion," *The Journal of Politics* 76.4: 944-957.

Week 9- March 2-6
M. Identifying Problems with elections
W. Designing Research
F. Brainstorming for research projects & proposing research

Week 10- March 9-13
Spring Break-NO CLASS

Part 3. Researching State Election Policies
Week 11- March 16-20 The Politics of Election Reform: Litigation and Impact on Voters
M. Voter Purges
- Herron and Smith (2018) "Estimating the Differential Effects of Purging Inactive Registered Voters," Working Paper - Election Sciences, Reform and Administration Conference: 1-29.

W. Youth Pre-Registration
- Holbein and Hilligus (2015) "Making Young Voters: The Impact of Preregistration on Youth Turnout," *American Journal of Political Science* 60(2): 364-382.

F. NO CLASS

<mark>S. Option #6: Annotated bibliography; state youth pre-registration laws (ncsl.org)</mark>

Week 12- March 23-27

M. Polishing our research questions

- Prepare to discuss your research questions in class

W. Using the literature to design our own research

- Prepare to talk about your research project

F. Tommy Cardin, Butler Snow Law firm

Week 13- March 30- April 3

M. Writing Day

W. Writing Day

F. Youth Leadership Summit

S. Draft 1 due/Draft Alt assignment due

Week 14-April 6-10 Research Presentations

M. Research presentations

- Presenters' drafts will be shared with audience for peer review
- Assigned reviewers will distribute their comments to presenters

W. Research proposal presentations

- Presenters' drafts will be shared with audience for peer review
- Assigned reviewers will distribute their comments to presenters

F. NO CLASS

Week 15- April 13-17 Ongoing Debates in Election Reform

M. Research Presentations

- Presenters' drafts will be shared with audience for peer review
- Assigned reviewers will distribute their comments to presenters

W. TBD

F. TBD

Week 16- April 20-22 Wrapping Up

M. Course Review and Final Assignment Details

W. Q&A session for Final Assignments

Week 17- April 27 Final Assignment Due

Course Policies
I) Late Assignments
Any written assignment is late if it has not been submitted by the required deadline. **Late submissions will be penalized (downgraded)**. An additional letter grade will be deducted for each additional day the assignment is late up to a maximum of three days, after which it will receive a 0. You are strongly encouraged to submit your assignments early so that you will avoid last minute complications. Excuses for late assignments will not be accepted.
I generally do not assign "incompletes," unless presented with extraordinary circumstances, given proper documentation.

II) Attendance and Professional Conduct-Class Etiquette
The success of this class is heavily dependent on your active engagement and contribution to class discussions. You are expected to attend **all** class meetings and be prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course materials. Note that your physical presence in the classroom (attendance) **does not** equal active participation. (See participation grading guide below).

The seminars are organized around topics and readings following the course schedule. This class is aimed to stimulate discussion among the students under my facilitation. In order for this to be a successful course, **it is imperative that you do the assigned readings *before* class, give yourself time to think about them, and prepare yourself to discuss them in class.** If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class, make sure to compensate for that by discussing the readings with me during office hours.

Always be courteous and polite towards your peers and the instructor, addressing them with respect and in a professional manner. Although you are entitled to your own views and opinions, the use of offensive/derogatory language will not be tolerated.
The use of laptops/tablets is allowed during our meetings only if they are used to take notes or review readings. If I detect that you are using your device in any other capacity (i.e. emails, Facebook, Twitter etc.) you will be asked to leave the classroom and no attendance points will be awarded to you for that meeting. Repeat offenders will experience a significant reduction of their overall course grade.

The use of cellphones (talking/texting) is absolutely prohibited during our meetings. Professional etiquette dictates that your cellphone is silent and out of reach when in class. If it rings and I hear it, you will be asked to set it on silent. If it rings again you will be asked to leave the classroom.

III) Student Honor Code
Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: "As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do." Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a

commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Student will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: http://honorcode.msstate.edu/policy.

IV) Title IX

MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU's educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the university community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU's Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at http://www.msstate.edu/web/security, or at http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/.

V) Classroom and Testing Accommodations

Disability Support Services assists in determining the classroom accommodations that are most appropriate for students with disabilities based on documentation of their disability. Disability Support Services encourages communication with instructors regarding accommodations. Disability Support Services will provide eligible students with Notification Letters regarding their classroom and testing accommodations to give to their professors. Examples of classroom and testing accommodations are varied, but may include: Adapted testing arrangements, extended time on tests, testing in a distraction-free environment, assistance with alternative formats of textbooks, and advocacy with the MSU Housing Department for help with living arrangements.

Guidelines for Documentation of Students with a Learning Disability, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), or a Psychiatric/Psychological Disability are located at http://www.sss.msstate.edu/disabilities/

VI) *University Safety Statement*

Mississippi State University values the safety of all campus community members. Students are encouraged to register for Maroon Alert texts and to download the Everbridge App. Visit the Personal Information section in Banner on your mystate portal to register. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort via Safe Walk, call University Police at 662-325-2121, or in case of emergency, call 911. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit ready.msstate.edu.