Purpose: This seminar concerns the effects of changes in political discourse on the extension or withdrawal of voting rights to or from inhabitants of the United States. “Discourse” is a concept from linguistics mentioning a higher-order element of the neural process that compiles and interprets texts; a “text” is any communicative event. Linguistic discourse selects among components of language and arrangements of the components while coordinating their combination into audible, visible or tangible texts. Discursive coordination renders texts coherent. A discourse becomes political when participants in an exchange of texts interpret the texts that the discourse shapes as pertaining to the exercise of political authority. Rejecting the view that “talk is cheap,” in this seminar we will study both how talk might make politics and how an observer might be able to decide whether it does. The investigation will begin with an examination of restrictions on the right to vote in the US and the gradual process of the removal or restoration of those restrictions. Then we will look at how printed political documents have changed over time and correlate the changes in political print with the loosening or tightening of restrictions on the right to vote.

Requirements: Although some seminars may be exchanges of student opinion, this one is instead an exercise in group learning in which the students take on the task of teaching each other, to the extent that they can, about a set of readings concerning a particular topic. The requirements for the seminar are intended to help you accomplish this task. There are four requirements: (1) constant attendance, except that I ask you, for the sake of your fellow students’ health and my own, not to to attend if you are ill and you have permission not to attend if you inform me of an emergency (please don’t tell me that you have scheduled a conflict with the seminar meeting); (2) preparation in three forms—(a) attentively reading the assigned book before each session, (b) posting a weekly writing assignment and (c) commenting thoughtfully on other students’ postings; (3) oral participation in seminar discussions; (4) submission of a research paper of 5000 words using the techniques taught in the seminar to answer the question whether change in political discourse can explain the observed pattern of extension and contraction of the right to vote. Your paper must discuss how each assigned reading pertains to the question. The paper is due the Monday after finals week through turnitin.com. No paper copies or attachments to email will be accepted.
Assignments: **By Monday at midnight**, each student must post each weekly assignment on the course site "discussion forum." The assignments are graded only when you fail to post them. They are learning opportunities for all students, not tests. **Write your post before you read any other student’s post!** If all of you just crib from other students’ post, the assignment does nothing to help you grapple with the reading. Your original post should not exceed 500 words. For your benefit and the benefit of other students, make sure that you provide references in the form of page numbers for each statement you draw from the assigned reading. **By Tuesday at midnight**, each student must post a response to three other students’ posts. **Be respectful and be nice!** You get credit for the response, not for outdoing the original post. To achieve those objectives, do not evaluate, neither positively nor negatively. Don’t use any expression synonymous with “I like” or “I dislike,” refrain from describing the author or content of the post to which you respond, and generally avoid the first and second person. A response that just echoes the original post is no use to anyone. Figure out how to add something from the assigned reading that is not already present in the original post to which you are responding.

In preparing your paper, make sure you **read and follow** the guidance posted on the classweb site concerning references and use of quotations and paraphrases. Following this guidance will assure that you do not plagiarize or fabricate your essay.

Reading schedule and assignments:

All readings except Ratcliffe are available at ASUCLA; Ratcliffe is posted on classweb

Assignment: Who had the right to vote in 1789 and who obtained or lost it by 1855?

Week 3: Keyssar, *The Right to Vote* (chapters 4-6)
Assignment: Who obtained or lost the right to vote between 1855 and 1920?

Week 4: Keyssar, *The Right to Vote* (chapters 7-9 and Afterword)
Assignment: What does Keyssar think changed the right to vote, and does his own evidence agree with him? Hint: Review Introduction

Week 5: Andrew W. Robertson, *The Language of Democracy: Political Rhetoric in the United States and Britain, 1790-1900* (US chapters only)
Inaugural Addresses: John Adams, Jefferson 1, Hayes
Assignment: What three forms of political discourse were encountered in the United States before 1900 and how do they correspond to the sequence of expansions and contractions in voting rights?
Inaugural Addresses: Pierce, T. Roosevelt, Wilson 1
Assignment: How has presidential discourse changed over time?

Week 7: George Lakoff, *Moral Politics* (contemporary political discourse), 3-178, 322-334, 389-426
Inaugural Addresses: L. Johnson, G.W. Bush 1, Obama 1
Assignment: What is characteristic of modern political discourse in the United States?

Week 8: Richard D. Anderson, Jr., *Discourse, Dictators and Democrats: Russia's Place in a Global Process* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2014), Chapters 1 and 2
Assignment: Why do voting rights depend on discourse?

Week 9: Anderson, *Discourse, Dictators and Democrats*, Chapters 4 and 5
Assignment: How has enfranchisement in the United States differed from enfranchisement in Europe, Japan, and other British settler colonies?

Week 10: Analysis of inaugural addresses
Assignment: Bring texts of inaugural addresses that you intend to analyze in your papers with examples of the kinds of discourse discussed in the other assigned readings.