

GOV 2060

Campaigns and Elections

Fall 2016
Kanbar 107
Monday and Friday, 10am-11:25am

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Office Hours:

Monday, 3pm-4pm
Wednesday, 10am-11:30am
And by appointment

This course introduces current theories and controversies concerning political campaigns and elections in the United States. We take advantage of the fact that the class meets during the heart of the 2016 elections, and students are expected to follow journalistic accounts of the fall campaigns closely. The course is split into two major parts. **First**, we consider the style and structure of American campaigns. For example, we ask how campaigns have changed in the last fifty years, especially concerning the role of parties, the presence of incumbency advantage, and the role of money. In addition, we consider why candidates decide to run, how they position themselves on important issues, and how they design their campaign messages. We also cover the importance of campaign polling and the tricky task of forecasting election outcomes. **Second**, we explore the impact of campaigns on voters. For example, we ask whether campaigns ever convince voters to change their opinion, or whether demographic and socioeconomic factors explain most political behavior. We spend considerable time on the effectiveness of campaign advertisements. The goal of the course is to review the importance of elections in American politics and to provide the tools to make normative judgments about the health of American democracy.

Course Requirements

There are 6 major components to your grade:

1. **Three reading reactions** (6 points; each worth 2 points) — these are short reactions of about 2 pages (double-spaced). I will evaluate these on the basis of how well you react to the readings (namely, originality of thought and conciseness). There are no right or wrong answers, but I will challenge you to think logically. These papers are due **in class** on Monday or Friday, and they should focus on the readings for that day. Because there are only 3 of them, you can choose on which days you want to turn them in. *You must hand in reaction papers in class; late papers or emailed papers will NOT be accepted.*
2. **Weekly Quizzes** (10 points)—there is a possibility of a quiz on any class day that will deal with the readings for that specific day. It will consist of 2-3 very short questions on the readings. **You are exempt from the quiz if you do a reading reaction on that day.*

3. **Participation** (10 points)—this includes attendance and class participation. Attendance is required, and I will take regular note of who is and who is not in class. I understand that people get sick, have doctor's appointments, and so on, but I will only grant excused absences in rare circumstances. Be advised, simple attendance is not sufficient; I will also evaluate you on your comments in class, as well as your participation on Blackboard (more on that below), and I urge you to ask questions in lecture or express your opinion.
 *To facilitate participation, I will also assign each of you one congressional or gubernatorial campaign. You are responsible for following the campaign closely. I will usually begin each class by calling on a few of you and asking you to report to the class on the current state of the campaign (i.e., major issues and controversies; current polling data; recent debates or campaign gaffes). Campaign assignments will be announced in the second week of classes.
 I will make use of Blackboard to convey information and class discussion topics. I have also posted there a number of websites for you to consult that will help you keep track of your assigned campaign. And I have also set up a number of discussion forums. I hope you take advantage of these forums to pass on important information to your classmates about the upcoming congressional elections. *Participation on these discussion boards is mandatory. I have no required number of posts, but I would aim for 1-2 posts per week.***

4. **Midterm Exam** (32 points) — scheduled for Friday, October 21st. The exam is open book and open note. The format will be short answers and essays, and both will be derived from readings and lectures. Exams will be transmitted to you electronically, and you will have a specific time (two hours) and page limit (seven total pages—double spaced, 12-point font). More information will be provided as we approach the exam.
 *The seven-page limit will be strictly enforced. I will not read past Page 7.
 **You are NOT allowed to work with another student on completing the exam. ANY evidence of collaboration during the exam is grounds for failure of the class. (Joint studying is, of course, permitted.)

5. **Final Exam** (32 points) — a take home exam that is NOT cumulative; it is on the lectures and readings for all classes after the mid-term. The parameters of the exam are the same as the mid-term. The exam is scheduled for ***December 15th***.

6. **Election Assessment Memo** (10 points) — You will be responsible for writing a ***5-page*** (double-spaced) memo (5 pages total, and no more!) for your candidate. It should focus on explaining the outcome of the election to the candidate. Why do you think the candidate won or lost the campaign? What would you have done differently had you been running the campaign? You have free rein on what to put in the memo, but *good memos will make reference to class concepts!!*
 *Due in class on December 2nd.

Readings

There are three books for this course, and a handful of outside articles. The books are available through the campus bookstore, and all of the outside readings are on Blackboard.

1. *Campaigns and Elections* (2nd Edition), by John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossman, and Keena Lipsitz. W.W. Norton and Company.
2. *Political Advertising in the United States*, by Erika Franklin Fowler, Michael Franz, and Travis Ridout. Westview.

3. *Resilient America: Electing Nixon in 1968, Channeling Dissent, and Dividing Government*, by Michael Nelson. University Press of Kansas.

Other Issues

1. I expect all students to abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code, which can be accessed online at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/forms/>. If you have any concerns or questions about how to cite work appropriately, please consult me or a reference librarian.
2. If you have chosen to take the class as Credit/D/F, I will only grant a Credit grade if the student has completed all of the work for the class. This means completing all three reading reactions, the election assessment memo, and both exams.
3. I am not allowing the use of laptops during class time. Old-fashioned notebooks and pens/pencils are recommended for note-taking.

Course Outline

September 2— Introductions and Expectations

- Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” *Harpers Magazine*, November 1964
- John Sides, Lynn Vavreck, and Michael Tesler, “The Electoral Landscape of 2016,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, September 2016

September 5— American Electoral System

- Sides et al, Chapters 1-2

September 9— American Electoral System, cont.

- Sides et al, Chapter 3

September 12— A Step Back in Time

- Nelson, Foreword, Preface, Chapters 1-2

September 16— A Step Back in Time, cont.

- Nelson, Chapters 3-4

September 19— A Step Back in Time, cont.

- Nelson, Chapter 5

September 23— Incumbents, Challengers, and the Vanishing Marginal

- Gary Jacobson, Chapter 3, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*

September 26— Issue Positions

- Stephen Ansolabehere, James Snyder and Charles Stewart. 2001. “Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1):136-159

September 30— Campaign Finance

- Sides et al, Chapter 4

October 3—Political Advertising

- Franz et al, Chapters 1-3

October 7— Political Advertising, cont.

- Franz et al, Chapters 4-6

October 10— No class (Fall Vacation)

October 14— Polling

- D. Sunshine Hillygus. 2011. “The Evolution of Election Polling in the United States,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 75(5): 962-981

Review Sheet for Mid-term Exam handed out

October 17— Mid-term Review

October 21— Mid-term Exam

October 24— Campaign Strategies

- Sides et al, Chapter 5

October 28— A Step Back in Time, cont.

- Nelson, Chapters 6-7

October 31— A Step Back in Time, cont.

- Nelson, Chapters 8

November 4— Parties and Organized Interests

- Sides et al, Chapters 6-7

November 7— Media

- Sides et al, Chapter 8

November 11— A Review of Tuesday’s Election Results

- No Readings (but come prepared to discuss your assigned campaign)

November 14—Presidential Elections

- Sides et al, Chapter 9

November 18— Congressional and Down ballot Elections

- Sides et al, Chapters 10-11

November 21— Voters

- Sides et al, Chapters 12-13

November 25— No class (Thanksgiving)

November 28— Political Advertising, cont.

- Franz et al, Chapters 7-8

December 2— Some Normative Considerations

- Franz et al, Chapter 9
- Sides et al, Chapter 14

Campaign Memos due in class
Review Sheet for Final Exam handed out

December 5—Looking to 2018

- No readings

December 9—Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: Thursday, December 15th