

PSCI 3021: Campaigns and Elections
Prof. Kenneth Bickers
9:30-10:45 TTh, Hellems 211
Fall 2016-2017

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Course Description

Regularly scheduled competitive elections are at the heart of all democratic societies. Indeed, one consequence of the rise of democracy around the world is that for many people, government actions, even when those actions are found to be disagreeable or contrary to our personal preferences, are typically viewed as legitimate, *if* the leaders taking those actions have been duly elected in an electoral system that is broadly viewed as fair. Yet the practice of democracy is often messy and imperfect.

Criticisms are often leveled at American democracy because of its persistently low turnout rates, the frequent lack of serious challengers to incumbents running for reelection, the gerrymandering of electoral maps to protect incumbents, the impact of money on campaigns, the manipulation of voters through media advertisements, the distortion of popular will due to the institution of the electoral college, and more.

In this class, we will exam the electoral system and election campaigns to better understand democratic practice in America and to consider criticisms frequently made about it. We will explore campaigns and elections at the national level, focusing particularly on presidential and congressional elections. We will also focus on local elections, in particular mayoral and city council elections. Our goal will be to understand how campaigns and elections work in America and to explore the various arguments about why election processes work as they do. More fundamentally, the goal is for each student to be self-reflective about strengths and weaknesses of democracy as it is practiced in this country.

Course Requirements

As it happens, I direct the University of Colorado's Washington, DC, based internship program, CU in DC. This requires that I be in Washington DC for a few days each month. Consequently some class sessions will be conducted using the distance-education technology available in our classroom. For the same reason, there will be days when I will need to hold office hours via Skype. The Skype username for these sessions is "PSCI3021".

The format of the course will be a combination of lectures, small group exercises, and class room discussions. Class sessions will be kept sufficiently informal that questions and discussions can be entertained. We will regularly discuss the presidential campaigns that will be unfolding during the semester, in order to expand upon issues that are being encountered in readings, discussions, and lectures. There will be a variety of in-class assignments that will deal with the assigned readings. These in-class assignments will occur at most class sessions.

Additionally, there will be a mandatory group research project, discussed below. There will also be three exams (i.e., two midterms and a final). Each of these exams will entail a combination of terms and concepts that you will be asked to identify or define, as well as longer essays. Exams will be non-cumulative.

In-Class Assignments. In-class assignments will include a number of short memos and responses to readings and topics that are being discussed in class. They are designed to give you an opportunity to think carefully about issues central to understanding political campaigns and elections – issues which you are likely to encounter on an exam. These assignments will be announced during the class period in which they are assigned, and will be graded using a dichotomous scale of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A satisfactory grade means that the assignment was seriously attempted. Not being present for an assignment will produce a grade of unsatisfactory. With the exception of absences that have been excused in advance (such as for a university sponsored athletic event, or a documented illness), in-class assignments cannot be made up.

Group Research Projects. Each student will be required to work in a group involving (generally) three students to produce a research project. The question for the research projects is simple: why did the results of the 2016 general elections differ, if they did, from the conventional wisdom? Each group will be assigned at random the House, the Senate, or the presidential contest to evaluate. House projects will focus on districts that were deemed by “conventional wisdom” to be toss-ups or leaning toward one party or the other. Senate projects will focus on all contested Senate seats. Presidential projects will focus on the 51 contests in the states and DC. Each group will submit a short memo (two or three pages) characterizing the “conventional wisdom” with respect to the expected outcome in its set of contests, along with sources used and a discussion of caveats or conditions associated with this “conventional wisdom.” These memos **MUST** be submitted to the D2L dropbox by Friday, October 14 at 8 pm. These memos will be graded as part of the final term paper, and as such do not receive a separate grade. They form the background for the research paper that **MUST** be submitted no later than 8 pm on Tuesday, December 6. Failure to submit the “conventional wisdom” memo on time will result in an automatic two letter grade reduction on the final research paper. The research paper will investigate, using the major hypotheses encountered through the semester, why the final election results differed, if they did, from the “conventional wisdom” that existed approximately 4 weeks prior to Election Day. These papers should be 10-12 pages, double-spaced, using a ten or twelve point font), including any pages used for tables or figures. They will be graded for substantive content, clarity, and grammatical precision. Please note that research papers will be penalized one full grade if they are not turned in at the assigned time on the day they are due. A full letter grade reduction will be taken if the research product is submitted after the 8 pm deadline and for each three days that go by until it is turned in. Specific instructions for the research papers will be provided in class.

Additionally, at the end of the semester each student will submit individually to me a completed form that describes the relative work load of each member of the group. This form will ask you to indicate the approximate percentage of effort engaged in by each member of your group. It will also ask you to provide a short narrative describing the division of labor in researching and preparing the group’s research products. In cases, where the percentages assigned are approximately equal, the same grade will be given to each member of the group. In cases, where percentages diverge by non-trivial amounts, grades may be adjusted up or down so as to deal with problems of free-riding by members of the group.

The overall grade for the course will be determined as follows:

In-class assignments and discussions	10%
Midterm exam 1	20%
Midterm exam 2	22%
Final exam	23%
Group Research Papers	25%

Policies. With one exception, assignments will be penalized one full grade if they are not turned in by the assigned deadline. A full letter grade reduction will be taken for each three days that goes by until the assignment is turned in. The exception to this general policy is the group submission of “conventional wisdom” on the upcoming elections for the House, Senate, or Presidential contests (depending on which set of contests your group has been randomly assigned.) If this submission is turned in late, your final group research paper grade will be reduced by TWO letter grades.

A word about my grading policy. No matter how careful, instructors sometimes make mistakes in grading. For that reason, I have an automatic regrade policy, subject to a couple of restrictions. I will be happy to regrade any exam or paper. I ask, however, that you hold on to any item for at least 24 hours after it is returned to you before asking for a regrade. Any request for a regrade must be made within one week after the exam is returned to you, after which no regrading will be done. Should you feel that an assignment has been misgraded, I encourage you to take advantage of this policy. Ordinarily, the entire exam or paper will be regraded, which means that the grade may go up, go down, or stay the same.

For exams (or any other aspect of the course), you should be aware of the University’s Disability Services. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices). If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services at least two week prior to the date when the accommodation is needed so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Injuries guidelines](#) under the Quick Links at the [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with your professor.

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you need an accommodation of any scheduled activity due to a conflict with a religious holiday or observance, please let me know by email at least two week prior to the date when the accommodation is needed. I will be happy to work out a suitable accommodation.

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the [policies on classroom behavior](#) and [the student code](#).

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU-Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

This course tackles subjects that are sometimes viewed as controversial. It is incumbent on every participant in the class (instructor and students alike) to strive to maintain an environment that is conducive to learning. We should always remember that people bring differences with them into the classroom and that these differences should be respected. It is imperative that each of us maintain civility when asking questions and making comments. Likewise, questions and comments by others should be treated with civility at all times.

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#) of the institution. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible of violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>.

Course Materials

This course involves a substantial amount of reading. For most class sessions, students will be expected to read chapters from books that have been assigned for the course and/or articles in

political science journals. Most of the journal articles will be available to you at the class D2L site. These articles can also be found at Scholar.Google.Com. To access the text of articles on JStor and Scholar Google, you will need to use an on-campus computer or setup a VPN account for an off-campus computer. Information about setting up VPN accounts can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/its/vpn/>. Two books have been ordered for use in this course:

Stephen C. Craig and David B. Hill. 2010. *The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice*, 2d ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (Available as a traditional paperback text or in Kindle e-reader form from Amazon.com).

Gary C. Jacobson and Jamie L. Carson. 2015. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 9th ed. Longman. (Available only as a traditional paperback text).

Course Outline

Thursday, August 25 – Overview (Note: there is no class on Tuesday, August 23)

Topics: Introduction and Course Overview
Tasks, expectations, grading
Thinking as a scientist: empirical, not normative
Constitutional Design: the three branches
Federalism – historical versus contemporary forms of federalism(s)
Types of governments in contemporary America
Election rules are methods for aggregating preferences

Readings: US Constitution, Articles 1-4, Amendments 12, 15, 17, 19, 23, 24, 25, and 26

Resources: Scientific Method
Governments in the US, 2007.

Week 2: August 30 & September 1 –Types of Election Rules

Topics: Review of types of elections rules
Pres. Nominating process for GOP versus Dems
Electoral College: Simple plurality, weighted by population size
US House and State Legislatures: Single Member Districts, w/ simple plurality, though sometimes plurality with runoff
Senate, Governor: At-Large w/ simple plurality or plurality with runoff
Local Variants: single member districts, multi-member at large districts.
cumulative voting systems, nonpartisan versus partisan elections
Electoral rules and their impact on election of women and minorities

Reading: Trounstein, Jessica, and Melody E. Valdini. "The Context Matters: The Effects of Single-Member versus At-Large Districts on City Council Diversity." *American Journal of Political Science* 52.3 (2008): 554-569.
Brockington, David, et al. "Minority representation under cumulative and limited voting." *Journal of Politics* 60.04 (1998): 1108-1125.

Week 3: September 6 & 8 – Presidential Elections

Topics: The Nominating Process
Campaign finance in the nomination process
Nominating Conventions: GOP vs. Dem. party rules, delegates/super-delegates

Readings: Barbara Norrander. “Presidential Nomination Politics in the Post-Reform Era” *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4. (Dec., 1996), pp. 875-915.
James I. Lingle, Diana Owen, and Molly W. Sonner. “Divisive Nominating Mechanisms and Democratic Party Electoral Prospects” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 2. (May, 1995), pp. 370-383.
Stephen Ansolabehere and Gary King. “Measuring the Consequences of Delegate Selection Rules in Presidential Nominations” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 2. (May, 1990), pp. 609-621.

Resource: Overview of Nomination and General Election Processes
Nominating Events 2016

Week 4: September 13 & 15 – Presidential Elections

Topics: The General Election Process and Electoral College
Campaign finance in the general election process
Use of polls, media events, paid advertisements

Readings: “Voter Decision Making in Election 2000: Campaign Effects, Partisan Activation, and the Clinton Legacy” by Sunshine Hillygus and Simon Jackman. *American Journal of Political Science* v. 47, n. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 583-596.
“The Methods behind the Madness: Presidential Electoral College Strategies, 1988-1996” by Daron R. Shaw. *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 4. (Nov., 1999), pp. 893-913.
“Representation, Swing, and Bias in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1872-1988,” James C. Garand and T. Wayne Parent. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 35, No. 4. (Nov., 1991), pp. 1011-1031.

Week 5: Exam and Campaign Effects

September 20 (Tuesday): Midterm 1

September 22 (Thursday) – Do Campaigns Matter (and When)?

Topic (Sept. 22, Thursday): Campaign Effects
Election Forecasting

Readings (Sept. 22 Thursday):

- “Campaigns, National Conditions, and U.S. Presidential Elections” by Thomas Holbrook. *American Journal of Political Science*, v. 38, n. 4 (Nov., 1994), pp. 973-998.
- Michael John Burton, Daniel M. Shea, and William J. Miller, “Campaign Strategy” in *The Electoral Challenge*, with response by Charlie Black.
- Alan O. Sykes, “An Introduction to Regression Analysis,” The Inaugural Coase Lecture. http://www.law.uchicago.edu/files/files/20.Sykes_Regression.pdf

Week 6: September 27 & 29 – Turnout

- Topics: Who Votes? And Who Doesn't?
Turnout in other democracies.
Rational actor theory of voting: the "paradox of voting"
Election Laws: if voting were less costly, would voter turnout increase?

- Readings: Arend Lijphart. “Unequal Participation: Democracy’s Unresolved Dilemma.” *American Political Science Review*, v. 1, n. 1 (1997), pp. 1-14.
- Mary Fitzgerald. “Greater Convenience But Not Greater Turnout” *American Politics Research*, v. 33, n. 6 (November, 2005)
- John H. Aldrich. “Rational Choice and Turnout.” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 1. (Feb., 1993), pp. 246-278.

- Resource: Voter Turnout, Comparative Data.xls
Rational actor model of voter turnout.doc

Term Paper: Overview

Week 7: October 4 & 6 – Turnout (continued)

- Topics: Does Negative Advertising Suppress Voter Turnout or Enhance it?
Does voter contact induce turnout?

- Readings: Child Care & Early Education Research Connections. “Experiments and Quasi-Experiments.” National Center for Children in Poverty and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.
<http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/datamethods/experimentsquasi.jsp>
- Ansolahehere, Stephen, et al. "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *American political science review* 88.04 (1994): 829-838.
- Wattenberg, Martin P., and Craig Leonard Brians. "Negative campaign advertising: Demobilizer or mobilizer?" *American political science review* 93.04 (1999): 891-899.
- Green, Donald P., Alan S. Gerber, and David W. Nickerson. "Getting out the vote in local elections: results from six door-to-door canvassing experiments." *Journal of Politics* 65.4 (2003): 1083-1096.

Resource: Getting Out the Vote in Local Elections.

Week 8: October 11 & 13 – How do people decide for whom to vote?

Topics: The classic model
Prospective evaluations: the civics model
Retrospective evaluations

Readings: Bafumi, Joseph, and Robert Y. Shapiro. "A new partisan voter." *Journal of Politics* 71.01 (2009): 1-24.

Alvarez, R. Michael, and Jonathan Nagler. "Economics, entitlements, and social issues: Voter choice in the 1996 presidential election." *American Journal of Political Science* 42.4 (1998): 1349-1363.

Resources: Voting Calculation Introduction.
Retrospective evaluations.
Prospective evaluations.

October 14 (Friday) – “Conventional Wisdom” Submission Due in D2L Dropbox, 8 pm

Week 9: October 18 & 20 – Mobilizing Voters

Topics: Swing voters and the impact of media

Readings: William Mayer, “Swing Voters” in *Electoral Challenge*, with response by V. Lance Tarrance.

Stephen Craig and Michael Martinez, “Voter Competence” in *Electoral Challenge*, with response by Mark Blumenthal.

Michael Franz, “Political Advertising” in *Electoral Challenge*, with responses by Mike Murphy and David Hill.

Week 10: October 25 & 27 – Political Scandal

Topic: the impact of scandal on voters

Readings: Beth Rosenson, “Scandal, Corruption, and Campaign Ethics”, in *Electoral Challenge*, with response by Susan Casey.

October 27 (Thursday): Midterm 2

Week 11: November 1 & 3 – Group Projects: Assessing the 2016 election cycle.

Topics: Assessing 2016.
Sample Theory

Readings: “How to Speak Geek, Part 2: Probability” by Sean Trende. *Real Clear*

Politics, October 28, 2015.

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/10/28/how_to_speak_geek_part_2_probability_128578.html.

Week 12: November 8 & 10 - Congressional Elections

Topics: The Context of congressional elections
Incumbency advantages, Vanishing Marginals, Quality Challengers

Readings: Jacobson, chs. 1-4, 7
Alan Abramowitz, Brad Alexander, and Matthew Gunning. "Don't Blame Redistricting for Uncompetitive Elections" *PS: Political Science & Politics*, vol. 39 (2006), pp. 87-90.

Week 13: November 15 & 17 – Congressional Elections

Topics: National Tides, Wave Elections, and Voting Patterns

Readings: Jacobson, chs. 5-6.
"Agenda Setting in Congressional Elections: The Impact of Issues and Campaigns on Voting Behavior." By Owen Abbe, et al. *Political Research Quarterly*, v. 56, n. 4 (December 2003), pp. 419-430.

Week 14: November 29 & December 1 – Local Elections

Topics: Local Electoral Politics: Race, Ethnicity, Group, Place, and Party

Readings: "A typology of nonpartisan election" by Adrian, Charles. *Western Political Quarterly* 12 (1959): 449-58.
"The Political Dynamics of Urban Voting Behavior" by Joel Lieske. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 33, No. 1. (Feb., 1989), pp. 150-174.
Schaffner, Brian F., Matthew J. Streb, and Gerald C. Wright. "A new look at the Republican advantage in nonpartisan elections." *Political Research Quarterly* 60.2 (2007): 240-249.

Week 15: December 6 & 8 – Direct Democracy in State and Local Elections

December 6 (Tuesday) -- Group Projects Due in D2L Dropbox, 8:00 pm

Topic: Ballot Initiatives: Can there be too much democracy?

Readings: "Direct Democracy and Candidate Elections" by Daniel Smith, in *Electoral Challenge*, ch. 9.
"Grassroots Mobilization" by Peter Wielhouwer, in *Electoral Challenge*, ch. 10.

“The Contingent Effects of Ballot Initiatives and Candidate Races on Turnout.” By Mark Smith. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (July 2001), pp. 700-706.

Final Exam: Sunday, December 11 at 4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.