

PSCI 3021: Campaigns and Elections

Mark Denniston

9:00-9:50 MWF in MUEN E064 and

12:00-12:50 MWF in KTCH 235

Spring 2010

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Office Hours: Mon 10:00-11:00, 1:00-2:00

Wed 11:00-11:50 and by appt.

Course Description

Regularly scheduled competitive elections are an essential requirement for democratic societies. Government actions, even those that are disagreeable or contrary to our individual preferences, are typically seen as legitimate, so long as our officials act according to laws passed by representatives that are duly elected in an electoral system that is broadly viewed as fair. Still the practice of democracy is often messy and imperfect. Criticisms are often leveled at American democracy because of our comparatively low turnout rates, the lack of serious challengers in many races where incumbents are 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 investigate the electoral system and election campaigns to better understand democratic practice in America. We will confront directly many of the criticisms frequently lodged against it as we focus particularly on congressional and presidential elections. Our goal will be to explore how campaigns and elections work in America and to examine the various arguments about why election processes work as they do. More fundamentally, the goal is for each student to be self-reflective about the strengths and weaknesses of democracy as it is practiced in this country.

Course Requirements

The format of the course will be similar to a seminar. That is, there will be some lecture, but mostly there will be guided classroom discussions of the readings and topics assigned for each class session. As with any seminar format, it is imperative that each student be prepared in advance by doing the assigned readings. In light of that, each student will be responsible for preparing a certain number of discussion memos (further details below). Additionally, there is a paper assignment that requires synthesizing the arguments from 3 professional political science journal articles. All papers must be turned in both electronically and in hard copy. I will make written comments on the hardcopy (unless specifically requested to make electronic comments instead), but will use the electronic copy to submit to turn-it-in.com and/or other electronic verification websites. 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.

Discussion Memos: Each student will be required to submit a one page (single-spaced) typed memo several times throughout the semester to be submitted via email, with the best memos to be circulated to your colleagues. A schedule will be arranged during the first week of class to assign which day of the week each student's memo will be due. Memos are to be sent by 5 p.m. the day preceding the student's assigned day (e.g. students assigned to Monday shall send their memos by 5 p.m. on Sunday). This memo is designed to accomplish two things: first, to encourage each student to think carefully about the topics and issues presented in the readings, and second, to help facilitate class discussions by identifying issues and questions that deserve deeper exploration. The first paragraph of the memo may consist of a summary of a particular reading or readings, but the remainder of the memo (which should be approximately two-thirds of the page) should critique the readings, identify issues that the student believes were unclear and pose questions for the class to discuss during class. A satisfactory grade means that the assignment was seriously attempted. Not turning in a memo will produce a grade of unsatisfactory. With the exception of absences that have been excused (such as for a university sponsored athletic event, or a documented illness), weekly memos cannot be made-up.

Grading Policies

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

Discussion Memos, in-class participation, and quizzes:	10%
Paper	25%
First exam	20%
Second exam	20%
Final exam	25%

Up to 10 points of extra credit may be earned toward first or second exam.

Papers will be penalized one full grade if they are not turned in by the assigned deadline. Thereafter, a full letter grade reduction will be taken for each three calendar days that goes by until the paper is turned in. The paper and each exam is required to pass the class—failure to complete the paper or any of the exams will result in failure of the course, not just a zero on the item in question.

Instructors sometimes make mistakes in grading. For that reason, I will agree to regrade any exam or paper, subject to a couple of restrictions. I ask that you hold on to any item for at least 24 hours after it is returned to you before requesting a regrade. A request for a regrade must be made within one week after the item is returned to you, after which no regrading shall be done. Should you feel that an assignment has been misgraded, I ask that you prepare a one paragraph written statement with your request, detailing what you believe I have overlooked or how you feel the grade is unfair. I will never penalize a request for regrade by lowering your grade.

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 (no later than one week before the first exam) so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See policy details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html. If you need an accommodation of any scheduled activity, due to a conflict with a religious holiday or observance, please let me know in writing of the conflict during the first two weeks of the semester. I will be happy to work out a suitable accommodation.

Also, please be aware that cheating or plagiarism, of any sort, will lead to an automatic grade of zero on the item in question. During exams, all electronic devices, including cell phones, iPods, MP3 players, etc., must be turned off and completely stowed out of reach. I strongly encourage you to review the University's policies with respect to academic integrity. In sum, the University position is that its reputation depends on maintaining the highest standards of intellectual honesty. Commitment to those standards is the responsibility of every student, faculty, and staff member on this campus. Consequently, cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Cheating is defined as using unauthorized materials or receiving unauthorized assistance during an examination or other academic exercise. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgment. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following: failing to use quotation marks when directly quoting from a source; failing to document distinctive ideas from a source; fabricating or inventing sources; and copying, without attribution, information from the Internet. For additional information on the academic integrity policies of the University, see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/acadinteg.html>.

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.

Finally, the University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff and faculty. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual attention. It can involve intimidation, threats, coercion, or promises or create an environment that is hostile or offensive. For additional information see http://www.colorado.edu/policies/sexual_misconduct_response.html.

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, articles in political science journals, and/or Supreme Court decisions. I will place the assigned articles and cases on the class CULearn website. Also the political science journal articles may also be found at www.jstor.org or by searching for the appropriate journal on the library's e-journal finder at <http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/research/ejournalfinder.htm> (remember to input the name of the *journal*, not the article name). These sites may also be helpful in conducting research for your papers. To access the jstor.org site or the library's e-journal finder 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/>.

Three books have been ordered for use in this course:

Fiorina, Morris P and Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope. 2006. *Culture War?: The Myth of a Polarized America*. 2nd ed. Pearson Longman: New York.

Sabato, Larry J. 2010. *The Year of Obama: How Barack Obama Won the White House* Pearson Longman: New York.

Paul D. Schumaker and Burdett A. Loomis, eds. 2002. *Choosing a President: The Electoral College and Beyond*. Chatham House: New York.

Course Outline

Week 1: Jan. 11 to Jan. 15 – Course Introduction, Presidential Elections Current Context,

Readings: Sabato, ch. 2-4 & Conclusion.

Week 2: Jan. 18 **MLK, Jr. DAY—NO CLASS**

Jan. 20 to Jan. 22 – Presidential Elections: Nominating Process

Readings: Sabato, ch. 1 & 10.

Week 3: Jan. 25 to Jan 29 – Presidential Elections: Nominating Process cont. Begin Turnout.
(O-Z)

Readings: "Do Primary Voters Draw from a Stacked Deck? Presidential Nominations in an Era of Candidate Centered Campaigns" by Wayne P. Steger.

Presidential Studies Quarterly, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Dec., 2000), pp. 727-753.

"Who Wins Nominations and Why?: An Updated Forecast of the Presidential Primary Vote" by Wayne P. Steger. *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (March 2007), pp. 91-99.

"Selecting Presidential Nominees by National Primary: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?" By Bruce E. Altschuler. *The Forum*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2008).

"Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma." By Arend Lijphart. *American Political Science Review*, v. 1, n. 1 (1997), pp. 1-14

Week 4: Feb. 1 to Feb. 5 – Turnout: Who Votes and Who Doesn't?

(A-F)

Readings: "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." By Michael McDonald and Samuel Popkin. *American Political Science Review*, v. 95, n. 4 (Dec. 2001), pp. 963-974.

"What if Everyone Voted?" By Jack Citrin et al. *American Journal of Political Science*, v. 47, n. 1 (January, 2003) pp. 75-90.

"Greater Convenience But Not Greater Turnout" By Mary Fitzgerald. *American Politics Research*, v. 33, n. 6 (November, 2005)

"The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the United States." By Adam J. Berinsky. *American Politics Research*, v. 33, n. 4 (July, 2005), pp. 471-91.

Week 5: Feb. 8 to Feb. 12 – Voter Behavior

Midterm 1: Friday, February 12

Topics: Voter Information, Heuristics, Mobilization

Readings: “Voting Correctly” By Richard R. Lau and David P. Redlawsk. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3 (Sept. 1997), pp. 585-597.

“The Mass Media and the Public’s Assessments of Presidential Candidates, 1952-2000” By Martin Gilens, Lynn Vavreck and Martin Cohen, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Nov. 2007), pp. 1160-1175.

“The Mobilization of Core Supporters: Campaigns, Turnout, and the Electoral Composition in United States Presidential Elections.” By Thomas M. Holbrook and Scott D. McClurg. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Oct. 2005), pp. 689-703.

“Identifying the Persuasive Effects of Presidential Advertising” By Gregory A. Huber and Kevin Arceneaux. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Oct. 2007), pp. 957-977.

Week 6: Feb. 15 to Feb. 19 – Congressional Elections

(G-M)

Topics: Historical Context, Incumbency Advantages, Quality Challengers

Readings: Sabato, ch. 5

Morton, ch 11 “Congressional Elections” (posted on CU Learn)

“Don’t Blame Redistricting for Uncompetitive Elections” by Alan Abramowitz, Brad Alexander, and Matthew Gunning. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan. 2006), pp. 87-90.

Week 7: Feb. 22 to 26 – Campaign Finance and Election Laws

(O-Z)

Readings: Sabato, ch. 6.

FEC v. Wisconsin Right to Life (2007)

Citizens United v. FEC (2010)

“The Check Is in the Mail: Interdistrict Funding Flows in Congressional Elections.” By James G. Gimpel, Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz. *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 52, No. 2, (April 2008), pp. 373-394.

Week 8: March 1 to March 5 – Political Environment and Partisan Polarization

(A-F) Readings: Fiorina, chs. 1-6

1st Group (G-M) Papers Due March 1, 2010 at the beginning of class.

Week 9: March 8 to 12 – Partisan Polarization cont.

(G-M) Readings: Fiorina, chs. 7-10

“Why Can’t We All Just Get Along?: The Reality of a Polarized America”
By Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders. *The Forum*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2005).

Week 10: March 15-19 – Partisan Polarization cont. Begin Presidential General Elections.

Midterm 2: Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Readings: Monday—“The Deeper ‘Culture Wars’ Questions” By John H. Evans and
Lisa M. Nunn. *The Forum*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2005).

“Don’t Blame Primary Voters for Polarization” By Alan
Abramowitz, *The Forum* Vol. 5, No. 4 (2008).

Friday—“The Methods Behind the Madness: Presidential Electoral College
Strategies, 1988-1996” By Daron R. Shaw. *Journal of
Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Nov. 1999), pp. 893-913.

Week 11: March 22-26 —**No Classes—SPRING BREAK!**

Week 12: March 29 to April 2 – Presidential Elections and Campaign Strategy. Begin Media.

(O-Z) Readings: “When Have Presidential Campaigns Decided Election Outcomes?” By J.E.
Campbell. *American Politics Research*, v. 29, n. 5 (2001), pp. 437-460.

“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.

“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.

Sabato, ch. 7-9.

2nd Group (A-F) Papers Due April 2, 2010 at the beginning of class.

Week 13: April 5 to April 9 Media and Negative Advertising

(G-M) Readings: Sabato, ch. 7-9.

“Sarah ‘Barracuda’ Palin and the Piranhas of the Press” By Carl M Cannon.
Politics Daily, July 8, 2009.

“Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?” by Stephen
Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, and Adam Simon, Nicholas Valentino.
American Political Science Review, v. 88, n. 4 (Dec., 1994), pp. 829-838.

“A Spot Check: Casting Doubt on the Demobilizing Effect of Attack
Advertising” by Steven Finkel and John Geer. *American Journal of
Political Science*, v. 42, n. 2 (April, 1998), pp. 573-595.

“Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the
Relationship Between Negativity and Participation” By Kim Kahn and
Patrick Kenney. *American Political Science Review*, v. 93, n. 4 (Dec.
1999), pp. 877-889.

Week 14: April 12-16 – Electoral College Introduction

Readings: “The Contemporary Presidency: Do Nebraska and Maine Have the Right Idea? The Political and Partisan Implications of the District System.” By Robert C. Turner. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 35, No. 1 (March 2005), pp. 116-136.
Schumaker & Loomis, chs. 1-4.

**Week 15: April 19-23 – Electoral College
(A-F)**

Readings: Schumaker & Loomis, chs. 5-11.

3rd Group (O-Z) Papers Due April 19, 2010 at the beginning of class.

Week 16: April 26 to April 30 – Electoral College cont. and Ballot Initiatives

Readings: Schumaker & Loomis, chs. 12
“Some Thoughts on the Electoral College: Past, Present and Future.”
By Akhil R. Amar. *Ohio Northern University Law Review* 33 (2007):
467-480.
“Direct Democracy: New Approaches to Old Questions” By Arthur Lupia
and John G. Matsusaka. *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004):
463-82.

Final Exams:

9:00 a.m. section: Thursday, May 6, 7:30 a.m. – 10:00a.m.
12:00 p.m. section: Saturday, May 1, 7:30 p.m – 10:00p.m.

This syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the instructor by posting an updated syllabus on CULearn. Scheduled readings may be adjusted by announcements during class.

