

PSCI 3021: Campaigns and Elections  
Prof. Kenneth Bickers  
TTH, 9:35-10:50, In-Person Hybrid Remote  
In-Person component located in MUEN E050  
Fall 2020-21

Office Hours: via Zoom 1:00-2:30 TH, and by appt.  
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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, frequent lack of serious challengers to incumbents running for reelection, gerrymandering of electoral maps to protect incumbents, impact of money on campaigns, manipulation of voters through media advertisements, 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 nonpartisan contests. 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 practiced in this country.

### **Course Requirements**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the format for this class is a hybrid of in-person and remote learning. The Covid capacity of the assigned classroom accommodates only half the number of students enrolled in this class. As a result, half the class will be able to attend in MUEN E050 on Tuesdays and the other half on Thursdays. There will be a live feed so that the students not attending can participate in real time from home. As explained below, we will use the chat feature in Zoom to enable discussion and questions in every class. Even students that are in-person should have a device with Zoom open during class times. Waitlisted students should not come to the classroom. Instead waitlisted students can participate remotely until they are able to enroll in the class.

Anybody that has been exposed to Covid-19, has any symptoms consistent with Covid-19, or is Covid-19 positive should participate remotely. Do NOT come to class if any of these situations apply. Note that you do NOT need permission to participate remotely. If you are symptomatic with Covid-19 (or any other illness) such that you are unable to participate remotely, please be in communication with me so that I can work with you to find an accommodation.

One other Covid-19 caution: should it turn out that I need to quarantine for any of the reasons above, I'll send you an email with as much advance notice as possible to let you know that the course will be conducted remotely for a period of time. This means you should always check email prior to each class session when you are scheduled to be in-person to see if the class has been shifted to remote status.

The format of the course will be a combination of lectures 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 are three exams (i.e., two midterms and a final). Each of these exams entails a combination of multiple choice items, as well as a small number of short essay questions. These exams will be conducted over Canvas. Exams will not be administered in the classroom. Exams are non-cumulative. Additionally, there is a mandatory group research project, discussed below.

**Class Participation.** There will be two types of class participation during the semester: one graded and the other ungraded. The graded form of class participation will take the form of threaded discussions. Each week during the semester I will pose a question or issue for discussion in a new thread on Canvas. Responding two times on the threaded discussion each week will produce full credit for that week's thread. Responding only once will produce half credit for that week. Not responding to that thread will produce zero credit for that week. Responses will be graded using a dichotomous scale of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A satisfactory grade means that the response was seriously attempted. The deadline for responding will be Friday evening at 10 pm each week for that week's threaded discussion.

Additionally, we will use the chat feature within Zoom for all students attending the class, whether in-person or remotely, to ask questions during class sessions. This will enable all students to participate in real time, every class period. I will monitor the chat column from time-to-time during class sessions and will respond to as many questions and comments as possible. This form of participation is ungraded, but is encouraged as it will make the class more educational and enjoyable for all of us.

**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 2020 general elections differ, if they did, from the conventional wisdom? Each group will be assigned at random Senate contests or the presidential contest to evaluate. Senate projects will focus on "toss up" and "leaning" Senate seats. Presidential projects will focus on so-called battleground states. 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." More information about how to determine "conventional wisdom" will be discussed in class. These memos do not receive a separate grade. They form the background for the research paper. Failure to submit the "conventional wisdom" memo on time will result in an automatic two letter grade reduction on the final research paper. These memos **MUST** be submitted to the Canvas dropbox by Sunday, October 25 at 10 pm.

The research paper will investigate, using at least three major hypotheses encountered through the semester, why the final election results differed, if they did, from the "conventional wisdom" that

existed approximately 2 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. The final research project **MUST** be submitted no later than 10 pm on Sunday, December 6. 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 10 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:

Class Participation	15%
Midterm exam 1	15%
Midterm exam 2	20%
Final exam	25%
Group Research Papers	25%

**Policies.** 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.

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 in the threaded discussions and when asking questions or making comments. Likewise, questions and comments by others should be treated with civility at all times.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES – REQUIRED SYLLABUS STATEMENTS**

**Classroom Behavior**

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. 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 race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

### **Requirements for COVID-19**

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

- maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
- wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
- clean local work area,
- practice hand hygiene,
- follow public health orders, and
- if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert [CU Boulder Medical Services](#).

Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policies on [COVID-19 Health and Safety](#) and [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the [COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course](#). Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a [Daily Health Form](#).

Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and complete the [Health Questionnaire and Illness Reporting Form](#) remotely. In this class, if you are sick or quarantined, send me an email as soon as possible that you will be missing class. I will work with you to find an accommodation that permits you to complete class obligations in a timely fashion.

### **Accommodation for Disabilities**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

### **Preferred Student Names and Pronouns**

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

### **Honor Code**

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu)); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

### **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

### **Religious Holidays**

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. In this class, please notify me at least two

weeks before such a schedule conflict so that I can find a reasonable accommodation for you. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details on this policy.

### 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. I reserve the right to change specific readings during the semester. At least a week's notice will be provided in such cases. Most of the journal articles will be available to you at the class Canvas 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. They are available as traditional paperback texts or in Kindle e-reader form from Amazon.com.

Stephen C. Craig and David B. Hill. 2010. *The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice*, 2d ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Gary C. Jacobson and Jamie L. Carson. 2019. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 10th ed. Longman.

### Course Outline

Week 1: August 25 & 27 – Overview

#### **NOTE: Tuesday, August 25: All Students Remote Only!**

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

Resource: Bickers, Kenneth, "Scientific Method"  
Bickers, Kenneth, "US as a laboratory for studying electoral rules"

Week 2: September 1 & 3 – 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.

Resource: Bickers, Kenneth, "Electoral Systems Module"

### Week 3: September 8 & 10 – Presidential Elections

Topics: Do Campaigns Matter (and When)?  
The Nominating Process  
Nominating Conventions: GOP vs. Dem. party rules, delegates/super-delegates

Readings: Michael John Burton, Daniel M. Shea, and William J. Miller, "Campaign Strategy" in *The Electoral Challenge*, with response by Charlie Black.  
Thomas Holbrook. "Campaigns, National Conditions, and U.S. Presidential Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, v. 38, n. 4 (Nov., 1994), pp. 973-998.

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.

### Week 4: September 15 & 17 – Presidential Elections

Topics: Campaign finance in the nomination process  
The General Election Process and Electoral College  
Campaign finance in the general election process

Readings: Barbara Norrander. "The Attrition Game: Initial Resources, Initial Contests and the Exit of Candidates During the US Presidential Primary Season" *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 36 (2006), 487–507.  
Sunshine Hillygus and Simon Jackman. "Voter Decision Making in Election 2000: Campaign Effects, Partisan Activation, and the Clinton Legacy." *American Journal of Political Science* v. 47, n. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 583-596.  
James C. Garand and T. Wayne Parent. "Representation, Swing, and Bias in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1872-1988," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 35, No. 4. (Nov., 1991), pp. 1011-1031.

Week 5: September 22 & 24 – Presidential Elections, Midterm 1

Topics: Use of polls, media events, paid advertisements

Readings: Daron R. Shaw. “The Methods behind the Madness: Presidential Electoral College Strategies, 1988-1996.” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 4. (Nov., 1999), pp. 893-913.  
Chen & Reeves, “Turning Out the Base or Appealing to the Periphery”

**Midterm 1:** Thursday, September 24, 9:35-10:50. Canvas only,

Week 6: September 29 & October 1 - Congressional Elections

Topics: Introduction to research projects  
The context of congressional elections  
Incumbency advantages, Vanishing Marginals, Quality Challengers  
Gerrymandering

Readings: Jacobson & Carson, chs. 1-4  
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 7: October 6 & 8 – Congressional Elections

Topics: National Tides, Wave Elections, and Voting Patterns

Readings: Jacobson & Carson, 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 8: October 13 & 15 – Mobilizing Voters, Research Projects

Topics: Swing voters and the impact of media  
Research Project Q&A

Readings: Jacobson & Carson, ch. 7.  
Sean Trende. “How to Speak Geek, Part 2: Probability.” Real Clear Politics, October 28, 2015.

Resource: Sean Trende, "How to Speak Geek, Part 1: Descriptives," Real Clear Politics, October 27 2015

Week 9: October 20 & 22 – 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.  
William Mayer, "Swing Voters" in *Electoral Challenge*, with response by V. Lance Tarrance.  
Michael Franz, "Political Advertising" in *Electoral Challenge*, with responses by Mike Murphy and David Hill.

**Conventional Wisdom Memos Due, Sunday, October 25, by 10 pm, to Canvas Dropbox**

Week 10: October 27 & 29 – 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.  
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.

**Midterm 2:** Thursday, October 29, 9:35-10:50. Canvas only,

Week 11: November 3 & 5 – Direct Democracy

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

- Readings: "Direct Democracy and Candidate Elections" by Daniel Smith, in *Electoral Challenge*, ch. 9.  
"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.

Week 12: November 10 & 12 – 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 13: November 17 & 19 – Turnout (continued)

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

Readings: 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.  
Ansolabehere, 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.

Resources: 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>  
Summary of Green, et al., "Getting Out the Vote in Local Elections."

Week 14: November 24 Only – 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

Week 15: December 1 & 3 – Vote Choice (Continued)

Topics: Voting Heuristics

Readings: Stephen Craig and Michael Martinez, "Voter Competence" in *Electoral Challenge*, with response by Mark Blumenthal.

**Group Projects – Sunday, December 6, 10:00 pm.**

**Final Exam – Sunday, December 13, 7:30-10:00 pm.**