

PLSC 130: American Political Campaigns and Elections

Course instructor:
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Office Hours: Fridays from 2:30-4:30 p.m.
Office: 230 Pond Lab

Class Hours: M-F 12:45-2:00 p.m.
Class Room: 167 Willard Building

LEAP Pride: Ethics and Politics
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Course Description

Campaigns and elections are the mechanisms used to place people into - and remove them from - office in American government. Electoral outcomes are the product of rules that govern who can run and participate in voting, the choices made by candidates and their campaigns, and the individual decisions rendered by voters at the ballot box. This course explores each of these items in more detail to provide a comprehensive understanding of how campaigns and elections operate in the United States.

This course is organized around three themes: electoral rules matter, the choices candidates make in their campaigns are consequential, and not all voters are motivated by the same factors. The first third of the course will explore the rules that govern who can run for office, how primary and general elections are conducted, and who can participate in politics. Next, we will explore how campaigns operate, including the formation of a campaign strategy, the development of polls and messages, soliciting donations, and campaigning with interest groups and parties. Finally, our class will address the decisions made by voters to first, participate in the electoral process and second, to choose one candidate over the others.

This course does not assume you have any prior understanding or experience with American politics, but will introduce you to the key rules, concepts, and theories important to understand electoral politics in the United States. Using social science research, I will strive to provide you with context to better understand how elections and campaigns operate in this country.

Learning Objectives: This course is organized around three motivating questions. By its conclusion you will be able to answer the following:

1. How are elections run in the United States and who is allowed to participate?

2. How do campaigns develop strategies that increase their likelihood of success?
3. Why do some people choose to participate in campaigns and elections, and if they do, what motivates their electoral decisions?

Student Objectives: To be successful in this course you are responsible for meeting the following objectives:

1. You will attend all classes on time, prepared to actively participate in discussions and activities.
2. In class discussions and exams you will be able to define, recall, and explain concepts and theories. This includes the ability to explain material, give examples of its use, and differentiate it from related terms and theories.
3. Demonstrate your ability to think critically and write effectively about course concepts and theories by submitting written assignments that analyze these items in the context of modern-day politics.

Readings

This course does not have a textbook; all readings are accessible online or through Canvas.

Assessment

Please record all of your grades and double-check your final semester score in the event of a miscalculation. You are not given grades, but earn them – exams, essays, and classroom participation provide you the chance to exhibit your knowledge and command of the material. Your grade in this course will be determined using the following formula:

Exams (3)	50%
Critical Essays (2)	30%
Participation	20%

We will use the following grading scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	76 to 79
C	70 to 75
D	60 to 69
F	59 and below

Exams: You will complete three exams to demonstrate your knowledge and command of the material. Questions will be drawn from our readings and in-class discussions and will ask you to recall, explain, and use relevant concepts and theories. We will have a review session prior to each exam. The format of each exam will be announced at the study session, but expect most questions to be formatted as concept definitions and short answers.

Critical Essays: You will have three opportunities to submit an essay in which you examine a current debate in American politics concerning campaigns and elections; I will count your best two scores towards your final grade. In this short paper you will identify the relevant concepts and theories from class and conduct your own independent research to develop a supported argument. Your essay should be uploaded to Canvas by the start of class (12:45 p.m. EST) on the days indicated on the course schedule. Each submission will be weighted equally and more information about this assignment can be found at the end of the syllabus.

Participation: Learning is an active process that requires you to become engaged in the material. Students who complete and think critically about the assigned readings, ask questions, and contribute to classroom discussion gain a better understanding and earn higher grades. Details on how your participation grade is calculated is attached to this syllabus. If you do not feel comfortable participating in class, be certain to engage with me using other mediums (office hours and email) to demonstrate your ability to understand and work with course concepts and theories.

Attendance & Make-Up Work

Your attendance in class is assumed. Poor attendance is correlated with low grades, and students who read the relevant material, come to class, and are engaged often have the highest grades. Attendance is not a component in your final grade, but classroom participation is assessed during every meeting time and you cannot participate if you do not attend. Because of the breadth of the material covered in this course we will move quickly and absences will result in missing a considerable amount of information.

You are allowed to make-up academic work only in the case of excused absences. These absences may include missing class for a University-sanctioned activity (with appropriate documentation), illness (a physician's note is necessary in the case of prolonged illness), religious observance, or a death in the family. If you know you are going to miss class or an exam, please contact me before the absence occurs to make arrangements about completing the work. If you have questions about this policy, please do not hesitate to ask – it is always better to inform me you are going to be absent before the event than after.

Expectations and Procedures

Respect: In this course, we endeavor to build a better understanding of campaigns and elections in the United States. Everyone comes to this course with different backgrounds in the subject matter and normative beliefs about what is *right* and *wrong* in the context of politics. It is important that we treat each other with the utmost respect and civility. Failure to demonstrate respect for anyone in the course will not be tolerated and may result in sanctions including, but not limited to, a reduction in your participation grade.

Late Assignments & Extensions: Assignments not submitted by the appropriate date and time are late. I will accept late assignments, but they will be subject to a 10% per day (including weekends) penalty. However, no assignments will be accepted after the semester has ended (August 10). If you know your assignment will be late through no fault of your own (i.e. you didn't give yourself enough time to complete the task) please contact me to inquire about an extension. Extensions will be granted at my discretion only and should be sought at least 24 hours prior to the due date.

Final Grades: I do not give grades, but you earn them; therefore, it is essential that you are proactive regarding your performance in this course. Do not wait until the end of the semester - or after final scores are posted - to ask me how to improve; at this point you can not. If you are unsure of your standing in the course or how to do better, please attend my office hours.

Be Flexible: While this syllabus represents an agreement between you, the student, and me, the instructor, I reserve the right to revise and modify any parts herein. Situations beyond either of our control may emerge causing us to change the original plan this document puts forth.

Academic Dishonesty: The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: <http://laus.la.psu.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/college-policies>

Note to Students with Disabilities: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator>). For further information, please visit the Student Disability Resources website (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/>). In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: See documentation guidelines at ([http:](http://)

[//equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines)). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services: Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, on-line chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS) (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>): 814-863-0395

Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses (<http://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/>)

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400

Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

Educational Equity and Reporting Bias Incidents. Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage (<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>). You may also contact one of the following offices:

University Police Services, University Park: 814-863-1111

Multicultural Resource Center, Diversity Advocate for Students: 814-865-1773

Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity: 814-865-5906

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs: 814-865-0909

Affirmative Action Office: 814-863-0471

Call 911 in cases where physical injury has occurred or is imminent.

Course Schedule

We will attempt to follow this schedule as closely as possible, however, we may choose to take more time on some subjects and less on others. All changes to the schedule will be announced in class. Under each day's topic, written in italics, you will find the big questions we will be addressing in class. It is helpful to keep these in mind as you complete each reading.

Week 1:

June 27: Introduction to the class

What do I need to do to get through this class? How do political scientists make sense of the world? What are the conclusions we will draw from this class?

- No readings

Section 1: The Electoral Process

June 28: Electoral Process: The Basics

Why do we need elections? Who are the players and what are their objectives? Where are election rules found? What are the qualities of a “good” election?

- Evaluating Campaigns and Elections (Canvas)

June 29: Electoral Process: Presidential Elections

What rules govern who can serve as president (and vice president)? What is the process used to select a president? How are parties involved in the selection of presidents?

- USA.gov. “Presidential Election Process.” <https://www.usa.gov/election>
- National Archives and Records Administration. “What is the Electoral College?” <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/about.html>

Week 2:

July 2: Penn State University Libraries

Where is the Penn State library? What resources are available? How do I use them?

- **Meet in Pattee W315** with Andrew Dudash. In-class research for Essay #1.

July 3: Electoral Process: Congressional Elections

Who can serve in Congress? What is the process for electing someone to the legislative branch? What rules govern redistricting in the states? Does redistricting matter?

- The Economist. 2002. “How to Rig an Election.” The Economist. April 25. (Canvas).
- Grofman, Bernard and Jonathan Cervas. 2018. “Pennsylvania has to draw new congressional districts, but getting rid of gerrymandering will be harder than you think.” *Monkey Cage*. February 9, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/09/nw-pennsylvania-has-to-draw-new-house-districts-but-getting-rid-of-gerrymandering-is-harder-than-you-think/?utm_term=.5391e1e8cfcf (June 1, 2018).
- Sides, John and Eric McGhee. 2015. “Gerrymandering Isn’t Evil.” Politico. June 30. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/could-gerrymandering-be-good-for-democracy-119581.html> (June 8, 2018).

July 4: Independence Day - No class

July 5: Electoral Process: Campaign Finance

Who can donate money to campaigns and how can these funds be spent? How do campaign finance regulations impact the strategies pursued by candidates, parties, corporations, and private individuals? Why is it difficult to regulate money in elections?

- Powell, Lynda W. and Clyde Wilcox. 2010. "Money and American Elections." In *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, ed. Jan E. Leighley. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 629-648. <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235476.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199235476-e-33>

July 6: Electoral Process: Electoral Law

How has the franchise evolved in the US? What rules govern voter registration? Is it easier to vote in some states versus others? How are votes counted?

- Encyclopædia Britannica. "Voting Rights Act." <https://www.britannica.com/event/Voting-Rights-Act>
- National Conference of State Legislatures. 2016. "Absentee and Early Voting." June 26. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx> (June 21, 2018).
- Enten, Harry. 2015. "Oregon's New Automatic Voter Registration Is Unlikely To Have A Big Effect." *FiveThirtyEight*. 18 March. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/oregons-new-automatic-voter-registration-is-unlikely-to-have-a-big-effect/> (June 21, 2018).

Week 3:

July 9: Electoral Process: Catch-up and Review

- **Critical Essay #1 Due at 12:45p.m.**

July 10: Exam 1

Section 2: Campaigning

July 11: Campaigning: Candidate Entry

Who runs for office? What motivates people to run for office? Why don't more women, young people, or members of racial minorities run? Does any of this matter?

- Malone, Clare and Julia Azari. 2016. "Thinking They're 'Unqualified' Is A Big Reason More Women Don't Run For Office." *FiveThirtyEight*. April 8. <http://53eig.ht/1TGdZbq> (June 1, 2018).
- Talbot, Margaret. 2018. "The Women Running in the Midterms During the Trump Era." April 18. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/2018-midterm-elections-women-candidates-trump> (June 1, 2018).

- Sisson, Patrick. 2017. "Millennials take city hall." December 11. <https://www.curbed.com/2017/12/11/16754822/millennials-2018-election-city-hall-local-races> (June 1, 2018).

July 12: Campaigning: Campaign Strategy & Opposition Research

What are the elements of a campaign strategy? What contextual factors influence how campaigns are run? What is opposition research and how is it used? What are the ethics of using opposition research?

- Edmondson, Hank. 2012. "Swing States." <http://www.hank-edmondson.com/amgovchapt7/swing-states.html>.
- Smith, Ben. 2011. Oppo: "From dark art to daily tool." August 3, 2011. <https://www.politico.com/story/2011/08/oppo-from-dark-art-to-daily-tool-060601?o=0> (June 1, 2018).
- Krieger, Hilary. 2017. "An Introduction To The Dark Arts Of Opposition Research." October 31, 2017. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/an-introduction-to-the-dark-arts-of-opposition-research/> (June 1, 2018).

July 13: Campaigning: Advertising – Choosing a Message

What topics should campaigns discuss? How do campaigns craft a message? When should they go negative?

- Watch the following videos:
 - "Peace Little Girl (Daisy)." <https://youtu.be/-ynEiRvxazU>
 - "Revolving Door." <https://youtu.be/TKXx8Gn0gA4>
- Sides, John. 2011. "The Moneyball of Campaign Advertising (Part 1)." FiveThirtyEight. October 5. <https://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/05/the-moneyball-of-campaign-advertising-part-1/> (June 8, 2018).
- Sides, John. 2011. "The Moneyball of Campaign Advertising (Part 2)." FiveThirtyEight. October 12. <https://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/the-moneyball-of-campaign-advertising-part-2/> (June 8, 2018).

Week 4:

July 16: Campaigning: Advertising – Getting the Message Out

How do campaigns get their message in front of the public? What are the benefits/costs of paid vs. earned media? What advertising strategies will campaigns choose?

- Gerber, Alan S., James G. Gimpel, Donald P. Green and Daron R. Shaw. 2011. "How Large and Long-lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 135-150.

July 17: Campaigning: Polling

What is a poll and how is it conducted? How can you interpret poll results? What is the difference between an internal and media poll? Why do campaigns conduct and use polls?

- Silver, Nate. 2018. "The Polls Are All Right." *FiveThirtyEight*. May 30. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-polls-are-all-right/> (June 17, 2018).

- Rakich, Nathaniel. 2018. "Internal Polls Are Usually Bunk." <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/is-don-blankenship-really-surgin-in-west-virginia/> (June 17, 2018).

July 18: Campaigning: Targeting

How do campaigns use data? How do candidates engage in targeting and microtargeting? What is the value of this data and the ethics of its use?

- Avirgan, Jody. 2016. "A History of Data in American Politics (Part 1)." *FiveThirtyEight*. January 14, 2016. <http://53eig.ht/1TYf7o1> (June 21, 2018).
 - Listen to the podcast linked on this page (about 50 minutes)
 - If you're interested part 2 is available here: <http://53eig.ht/1nAgr6o>
- Cadwalladr, Carole. 2018. "'I made Steve Bannon's psychological warfare tool': meet the data war whistleblower." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/data-war-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-faceook-nix-bannon-trump> (June 21, 2018).
- Trump, Kris-Stella. 2018. "Four and a half reasons not to worry that Cambridge Analytica skewed the 2016 election" *Monkey Cage*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/03/23/four-and-a-half-reasons-not-to-worry-that-cambridge-analytica-skewed-the-2016-election/?utm_term=.a451ff8c3bdc (June 21, 2018).

July 19: Campaigning: Fundraising

How much money will it take? How do campaigns raise money? Who is likely to donate to campaigns? Does the money matter?

- Tucker, Joshua. 2011. "Does Money Affect Election Outcomes in US Politics? A Quick Review of the Literature." *Monkey Cage*. November 4, 2011. <http://themonkeycage.org/2011/11/does-money-affect-election-outcomes-in-us-politics-a-quick-review-of-the-literature/> (June 1, 2018).
- Drutman, Lee. 2012. "Why Money Still Matters." *Monkey Cage*. November 14, 2012. <http://themonkeycage.org/2012/11/why-money-still-matters/> (June 1, 2018).
- Vavreck, Lynn. 2015. "Why Fund-Raising Is Important, Even if You Are Trump." *The Upshot*. <http://nyti.ms/1hFbndI> (June 1, 2018).

July 20: Campaigning: News Media

How does the media cover elections? Does media coverage affect voters and campaigns? Can campaigns influence the media?

- Geer, John G. 2012. "The News Media and the Rise of Negativity in Presidential Campaigns." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45(3): 422-427.
- Sides, John and Kalev Leetaru. 2016. "A Deep Dive Into the News Media's Role in the Rise of Donald J. Trump." *Monkey Cage*. June 24. <http://wpo.st/iSEj1> (June 8, 2018).

Week 5:

July 23: Campaigning: Political Parties

What role do parties play in primary and general election campaigns? What resources do parties provide candidates? How has the influence of parties changed over time?

- Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. "The Outrageous Nomination of Hubert Humphrey." In *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-18.
- Silver, Nate. 2016. "The Republican Party May Be Failing." *FiveThirtyEight*. January 25. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-republican-party-may-be-failing/> (June 16, 2018).

July 24: Campaigning: Interest Groups

What is the relationship between interest groups and candidates, parties, and voters? How has the role of interest groups changed? Are interest groups helpful, harmful, or neither in the campaign process?

- Francia, Peter L. 2010. "Organized Interests: Evolution and Influence." In *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, ed. Jan E. Leighley. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 611-628.

July 25: Campaigning: Catch-up and Review

- **Critical Essay #2 Due at 12:45p.m.**

July 26: Exam 2

Section 3: Voting Behavior

July 27: Voting Behavior: Voter Turnout

How many people vote in American elections? Why do some people vote while others abstain? Are people who turnout and vote similar to non-voters?

- Pew Research Center. 2014. "The Party of Nonvoters: Younger, More Racially Diverse, More Financially Strapped." October 31. <http://pewrsr.ch/1DDrk85> (June 8, 2018).
- Dalton, Russell. 2016. "Why Don't Millennials Vote?" *Monkey Cage*. March 22. <http://wpo.st/UMIj1> (June 8, 2018).

Week 6:

July 30: Voting Behavior: Partisanship

What is partisanship and from where does it arise? What is the impact of partisanship on political participation and vote choice?

- Pew Research Center. "1. Trends in party affiliation among demographic groups". <http://www.people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/>
- Take a look at the animation:
 - <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/section-1-growing-ideological-consistency/#interactive>
- Hopkins, Dan. 2014. "Partisan Loyalty Begins at Age 19." *FiveThirtyEight*. 22 April. <http://53eig.ht/1kWY0s2> (June 16, 2018).

July 31: Voting Behavior: Issue Voting

What do Americans know about politics and government? When will people acquire political information? How do attitudes effect vote choices?

- Carpini Delli, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. "What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters." Yale University Press. Chapter 4 (Canvas).

August 1: Voting Behavior: Identity Politics

Why and when are group characteristics important? What happens when people are members of multiple groups? Which groups are particularly relevant in American politics?

- Klinkner, Philip A. and Rogers M. Smith. 2016. "Trump's election is actually a return to normal racial politics. Here's why." *Monkey Cage*. November 17. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/17/trumps-election-is-a-return-to-normal-at-least-in-u-s-attitudes-on-race/> (June 9, 2018).
- Cramer, Katherine. 2016. "How rural resentment helps explain the surprising victory of Donald Trump." *Monkey Cage*. November 13. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/13/how-rural-resentment-helps-explain-the-surprising-victory-of-donald-trump> (June 9, 2018).

August 2: Voting Behavior: Strategic Voting

What is strategic voting and is it used commonly? How can strategic voting be used in primary elections? How can strategic voting harm independent candidates?

- Glueck, Katie and Kyle Cheney. 2016. "Cruz and Kasich Team Up to Stop Trump." *Politico*. 24 April. <http://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/04/ted-cruz-john-kasich-team-up-222377> (June 9, 2018).
- Riera, Pedro. 2016. "Tactical Voting." *Oxford Handbooks Online*.

August 3: Voting Behavior: Voting in Presidential General Elections

How do voters make choices in general election contests? How can we attempt to predict who will win the general election? Do campaigns matter?

- **Critical Essay #3 Due at 12:45p.m.**
- Achen and Bartels. 2016. "Democracy for Realists. Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government." Princeton University Press. Chapter 5 (Canvas).
- Fowler, Anthony. 2016. "Football games, shark attacks, and why voters may not be so incompetent after all." <https://medium.com/uchicago/football-games-shark-attacks-and-why-voters-may-not-be-so-incompetent-after-all-72c7e98ad7bd>

Week 7:

August 6: Voting Behavior: Voting in Congressional Elections

How do voters make choices in congressional elections? How can we attempt to predict who will win? What makes congressional races different from presidential contests?

- <https://www.opensecrets.org/overview/reelect.php>

- Enten, Harry. 2014. "Disliking Congress, as a Whole And as Individuals." FiveThirtyEight. July 1. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/disliking-congress-as-a-whole-and-as-individuals/> (June 17, 2018).
- Silver, Nate. 2014. "How The FiveThirtyEight Senate Forecast Model Works." FiveThirtyEight. 17 September. <http://53eig.ht/1u2pSbD> (June 17, 2018).

August 7: Voting Behavior: Voting in Local & Judicial Elections

How are local and judicial elections different? What is the impact of low information on voting? How do voters make decisions without partisan cues? What are the positive (and negative) aspects of an elected judiciary?

- Ballotpedia. "Judicial Selection in the States." https://ballotpedia.org/Judicialselection_in_the_states (June 8, 2018).
- Bell Cobb, Sue. 2015. "I Was Alabama's Top Judge. I'm Ashamed by What I Had to Do to Get There." Politico. March/April. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/03/judicial-elections-fundraising-115503> (June 21, 2018).
- Schaffner, Brian F., Matthew Streb, and Gerald Wright. 2001. "Teams without Uniforms: The Nonpartisan Ballot in State and Local Elections." Political Research Quarterly 54(1): 7-30.

August 8: Voting Behavior: Catch-up and Review

August 10: Exam 3 (date, time, and location to be scheduled by the University)

Critical Essay Assignment

The study of politics - and the practice of campaigning - demands that students be able to think carefully about problems and communicate ideas effectively. Good politicians need to be able to think through complex problems logically to develop clear positions, provide sound arguments in support of their theses, address relevant concerns, and clearly communicate to others why their position is preferable. In completing this class, I am going to ask you to think through big debates concerning campaigns and elections occurring right now in the public.

You will have three opportunities throughout the semester to submit two critical essays. You may write all three essays if you prefer and I will count the best two scores toward your final grade. For each section of the course, I will provide you with two essay options. Select the question you prefer – you will only address one question from each set in your paper. Essays are due by the start of class (12:45 p.m. EST) on the date indicated in the course schedule (and below). You will submit your papers to Canvas – there is no need to bring a hard copy to class.

Critical Essay #1 (Due July 9) – Choose between:

1. The presidential primary process can be confusing for the average American. Democrats allow superdelegates to vote at their national conventions while Republicans (largely) do not, some states use caucuses while others hold direct elections, and some states are allowed

to vote before others. Should the US have a national primary day (where all states vote on the same day) with the party's nominee being the candidate who receives the most votes from across the entire nation?

2. According to the U.S. Constitution, only the Electoral College is allowed to elect the president – not the public. Should the Electoral College be removed from the Constitution or should it remain in use?

Critical Essay #2 (Due July 25) – Choose between:

1. Some clean-election advocates argue the only way to remove the appearance of corruption from our campaign process is to have publicly funded elections. This system would provide all candidates - who demonstrated they have enough support by gathering a number of small donations - with the same amount of money from the government. Candidates could spend no more than this amount on their campaigns. Should the United States adopt public funding for its elections?
2. Should campaigns be barred from using negative (attack) ads in elections?

Critical Essay #3 (Due Aug. 3) – Choose between:

1. Many lament poor voter turnout in American elections. Should voting in the United States be mandatory with violators of this law subject to a fine?
2. There are no shortage of studies demonstrating that the average American is not well informed about government. Should all voters have to pass a basic political knowledge quiz before being allowed to vote?

Formatting

I am also going to ask that you follow a particular format in writing your essay. Your paper should contain the following sections:

1. Introductory paragraph containing a clear thesis
2. Three paragraphs (arguments) in support of your thesis
3. Two paragraphs (arguments) exploring opposing perspectives and providing a response
4. Concluding paragraph summarizing your argument

In sum, you take a clear position with regard to the question, provide three arguments in support of your position, address two points of concern, and conclude by summarizing your argument.

Outline

To help you organize your paper, I am also going to ask that you submit the outline of your paper with the final document. Your outline will contain the following items:

1. The question you are addressing
2. Your thesis statement

3. One sentence for each of the three arguments in support of your thesis, briefly explaining the argument. There should be a total of three sentences.
4. One sentence for each of the two arguments in support of the opposite perspective. There should be a total of two sentences.
5. One sentence explaining why, despite the two counterarguments, your thesis is nevertheless correct.

Sources

Each of these essay topics address items that we are likely to touch on in class, but may not fully discuss. Therefore, I expect that you are conducting your own research into the issue area. Your submission should include information you've learned in class and knowledge you've gleaned from other sources. While I'm not going to require that all of your references be peer reviewed, they should come from "legitimate" sources (i.e. newspapers, news magazines, government websites, academic blogs, etc.). If you have questions about what constitutes a good source, please ask. Your essay should contain at least 3 references and should be formatted using the American Political Science Association style. More information about this style guide can be found at: <https://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf>

Rubric

The essay will be assessed using the following rubric:

	0	65%	75%	85%	100%
Outline (15%)	Missing all of the required information.	Missing most of the required information and/or lacking clarity and organization.	Contains most of the required information. Organization and clarity need improvement	Contains all of the required information, but clarity and organization need improvement.	Contains all of the required information. Is properly organized and written clearly.
Thesis Statement (5%)	Does not take a position on the question.	Position taken is unclear and needs to more closely address the question.	Takes a position that partially answers the question and/or requires significant clarification.	Takes a position that fully answers the question, but requires further clarification.	Takes a clear position that completely answers the question.
Introduction & Conclusion (10%)	Essay is missing an introduction and conclusion.	Parts of the introduction and conclusion are missing or are largely underdeveloped. Substantial revision is necessary.	The introduction and conclusion are underdeveloped (or banal) and need to be more clearly written to address the required information.	The introduction and conclusion provide the relevant information, but needs to be more clearly articulated and/or explained.	Introduction is interesting and explains why the reader cares about the question and answer. The conclusion summarizes the arguments made and ties these back to the thesis.
Supporting Arguments (30%)	No arguments are put forward in support of the thesis.	Does not provide clear and convincing arguments in support of the thesis. Arguments lack support.	Provides 1-2 clear and accurate arguments in support of the thesis. The evidence provided may require further development.	Provides three clear and accurate arguments in support of the thesis. Some evidence is provided in support, but this requires further development.	Provides three clear and accurate arguments in support of the thesis. Each is supported by logic, facts, statistics, research, or other informed sources.
Opposition Arguments (20%)	No counterarguments are presented.	Indicates there are reasons the thesis should be called into question, but doesn't address specifics.	Provides only straw man or ingermene arguments. Alternatively, may not explain why the thesis is still supported.	Outlines and responds to two counterarguments. These require further development, more specific information, and/or better framing.	Clearly and accurately explains two counterarguments and demonstrates why the thesis is, nonetheless, correct.
Grammar & Style (10%)	Writing is aimless and disorganized. There are numerous errors that make it difficult to read.	The sentence structure and tone of the essay is awkward. There are a number of grammatical errors that make it difficult to read.	Writing sometimes gets off topic and is bland. Word choice may be wrong and sentences may be awkward. There are several grammatical errors.	Writing is clear, but the tone could be improved (example: too many colloquialisms). There are few grammatical errors.	Writing is clear, natural, and appeals to emotion, reason, and facts. The paper contains correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
Research & Citations (10%)	Does not provide or use sources.	Three sources are used, but originate from untrustworthy outlets. Several items are cited incorrectly	Three sources are used, but two may come from untrustworthy outlets. Two items are cited incorrectly.	Three sources are used, but one may come from a untrustworthy outlet. One item is cited incorrectly.	Three appropriate sources are used. Each is correctly cited using the APSA style manual.

Participation Grade

You will also participate in this class by attending and engaging in discussions. The following rubric describes my expectations for each grade-level:

A = A student earning an 'A' comes to nearly all classes prepared and can demonstrate superior comprehension of the material. They contribute to the class conversation, but don't dominate it – they make thoughtful contributions that advance conversation, showing interest in and respect for others' views. They are demonstrably engaged in course material and content.

B = A student earning a 'B' misses only a few classes, but attends having completed the readings and is able to demonstrate comprehension of the readings, perhaps lacking fully integrated views toward the material. They make thoughtful comments when called upon, show respect and interest in other student's views, and occasionally contribute without prompting. They are making a good-faith effort to participate in class, but may not have the integration of ideas of an "A" student or may not participate as often.

C = A student earning a 'C' misses several classes, but arrives having completed the readings and able to discuss their most basic tenets. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class and gives only minimal answers when called upon. They are putting forward some effort, but appear to be uninterested in the material and do not participate much without prompting.

D = A student earning a 'D' misses close to half of the classes, and when present has difficulty positively contributing. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class, and when prompted, gives responses that may be off-topic and demonstrate a lack of knowledge or preparedness. They are putting forth less than average effort in the course and may be having a negative impact on others.

F = A student earning an 'F' misses over half of the classes, and when present, cannot demonstrate they have read the material or thought about the concepts. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class and does not give answers related to the question being asked when prompted. This student does not appear to be interested in the content of the class and is putting forth a very minimal level of effort.