

**Sample syllabus description:** This course was developed as a part of my participation in the Graduate Teaching Certificate Program through the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence at Northwestern University. This sample illustrates a week-by-week reading plan for a semester system, but it can also be condensed for a quarter system.

### Campaigns in American Politics: Theories and Realities

*Course Description:* Political campaigns are the primary means through which American citizens actively engage with their political system. This course considers topics in American politics through the lens of political campaigns. It begins with a conceptual examination of American democracy and a review of its cultural and constitutional foundations: how should social scientists measure and evaluate the democratic character of American politics? In particular, this course emphasizes three central dimensions of democratic theory: *representation, information, and engagement*, and engages students with basic social science practices for assessing empirical outcomes on these dimensions. Using this conceptual foundation, the remainder of the course introduces students to a range of substantive topics through the lens of the strategic decisions made by political campaigns with the aim of teaching students how to think critically about the role of campaigns in American politics. Specifically, it encourages them to think about the relationship between the realities of campaigning in the United States and political actors, institutions, and citizens. These topics include congress and the presidency, the political behavior of American citizens, the role of political parties, the media, and interests groups, as well as Federalism and the legal institutions that structure American politics. For their final project, students will be asked to design their own campaign strategy and assess its democratic merit on the basis of how well their decisions promote representation, inform citizens, and engage them in the political process.

All students should walk away with the ability to be a critical consumer of political information and the behavior of political campaigns, an understanding of how social scientists approach the study of politics, and the importance of studying American politics in particular.

*Objectives:* By the end of the course, enrolled students should be able to:

1. Understand and describe the major components of the American political system
2. Use social scientific approach the study of politics to analyze real world political scenarios.
3. Evaluate the practices of political campaigns in the context of empirical and normative theories of American politics

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4. Become critical consumers of the behavior of campaigns in American politics by making strategic decisions from the perspective of a campaign manager and articulating the empirical and normative implications of their decisions.

### **Required Texts**

Panagopoulos, Costas. 2016. *Political Campaigns: Concepts, Context, and Consequences*. New York: *Cambridge University Press*.

Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. *The Victory Lab, The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*. New York: Broadway Books.

### **Grading**

15%- Participation: Assessed both by in class contributions and contributions to online discussion boards (which will be evaluated for formative purposes but not graded by professor and / or teaching assistant).

5%- Critical analysis paper #1: 3 Pages (12 point font, double spaced, 1" margins). Students will be given a news article detailing a campaign strategy and be asked to evaluate the strategy using the democratic tenants covered in week 1 in a three-page paper. (example of article that may be assigned: Issenberg, Sasha 2012. "A More Perfect Union: How President Obama's Campaign Used Big Data to Rally Individual Voters." *Technology Review*.

<http://www.technologyreview.com/featuredstory/508836/how-obama-used-big-data-to-rally-voters-part-1/>

20%- Midterm Exam: Students will take an in class, pencil and paper exam. The mid-term will be made up of short answer identification questions that ask students to define key concepts and place them within the context of the course, and an essay prompt that provides a real-world campaign scenario and requires them to draw on empirical evidence and normative theories covered thus far in crafting their responses.

20%- Critical Analysis Paper #2: Students will be asked to write a 6 page paper that uses evidence from weeks 1-4 to explain how the realities of American campaigns affect our normative and empirical examination of Congress and the Presidency. The paper must draw on two different aspects of political campaigning (e.g. mobilization and voter targeting), use evidence from assigned readings, and draw from real world examples.

5%- Outline of campaign strategy: Students will provide a brief outline of the campaign strategy for their final project.

35%- Campaign strategy and final papers: In groups, students will design a feasible, realistic campaign strategy designed to win an election. Individually, students will

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assess the democratic merit of their strategy on the basis of how well their decisions promote representation, inform citizens, and engage them in the political process. This assignment brings all four objectives together and asks students to think both from the perspective of a campaign manager and a critical consumer of politics. (15% of grade comes from group presentations, 20% of grade from paper)

### **Distribution of Topics, Readings, and Assignments**

#### **Week 1: Introduction to the Study of American Politics (Norms and Empirical Assessments)**

The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution

Rosenstone, Steven J. and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and American Democracy*. New York, NY: Pearson, Chapters 1 and 2

*The Federalist Papers* No. 10

Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation & Opposition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, Chapter 1- COURSE READER

**Final project assignment handed out:** The guidelines / scenario for the final project will be handed out at the beginning of the quarter so that students may use it as a reference point when completing other course assignments (the content of which should ideally be folded into their final projects).

#### **Week 2: Introduction to Political Campaigns in American Politics**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 1: Modern Political Campaigns: Why and How They (May) Matter

Griffin, John D. 2006. "Electoral Competition and Democratic Responsiveness: A Defense of the Marginality Hypothesis." *The Journal of Politics* 68(4): 911-921.  
COURSE READER

Issenberg, Prologue: How to win an election without anyone knowing

Issenberg, Chapter 1: Blinded by Political Science

#### **Week 3: Campaigns and Election Realities in American Politics: Money and Campaign Strategy**

**Critical analysis paper 1 due at the end of the week**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 4: Money and the Modern Campaign

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Hogan, Robert E. 2005. "State Campaign Finance Laws and Interest Group Electioneering Activities." *The Journal of Politics* 67(3): 887-906. COURSE READER

Panagopoulos, Costas and Daniel Bergan. 2006. "Contributions and Contributors in the 2004 Presidential Election Cycle." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36(2): 155-171  
COURSE READER

#### **Week 4: Campaigns and Election Realities in American Politics: Money and Campaign Strategy, Continued**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 5: Campaign Strategy

Issenberg, Chapter 4: The Two Percent Solution

Jan, Tracy. 2013. "For Freshman in Congress, Focus is On Raising Money." *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/politics/2013/05/11/freshman-lawmakers-are-introduced-permanent-hunt-for-campaign-money/YQMMMqCNxGKh2h0tOIF9H/story.html>. COURSE READER

Gilens, Martin and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 564-581  
COURSE READER

#### **Week 5: Campaigns and Election Realities in American Politics: Getting out the word**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 6: Getting the Word Out

Issenberg, Chapters 2: A Game of Margins

Huber, Gregory, A. and Kevin Arceneaux. 2007. "Identifying the Persuasive Effects of Presidential Advertising." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(4): 957-977  
COURSE READER

Panagopoulos, Costas, and Peter W. Wielhouwer. 2008. "The Ground War 2000-2004: Strategic Targeting in Grassroots Campaigns." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38(2): 347-362  
COURSE READER

Brockman, D.E. and Donald P. Green. 2013. "Do Online Advertisements Increase Political Candidates' Name Recognition or Favorability? Evidence from Randomized Field Experiments." *Political Behavior* 36(2): 263-289  
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**Week 6: Campaigns and Election Realities in American Politics: Getting out the vote**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 7: Getting Out the Vote

Issenberg, Chapter 3: The New Haven Experiments

Gerber, Alan S. and Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effect of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *The American Political Science Review* COURSE READER

Leighley, Jan E. and Jonathan Nagler 2013. *Who Votes Now? Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 5: Policy Choices and Turnout. COURSE READER

**Week 7: Two Congresses: Campaigns and U.S. Congress**

Sides, John, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossman, and Keena Lipsitz. 2014. *Campaigns and Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice*. New York NY: W.W. Norton. Chapters 8. COURSE READER

Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder and Charles Stewart III. 2000. "Old Voters, New Voters, and the Personal Vote: Using Redistricting to Measure the Incumbency Advantage." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(1): 17-34. COURSE READER

Grimmer, Justin, Solomon Messing and Sean J. Westwood. 2012. "How Words and Money Cultivate a Personal Vote: The Effect of Legislator Credit Claiming on Constituent Credit Allocation." *American Political Science Review* 10(4): 703-719 COURSE READER

Griffin, John D., Brian Newman, and Christina Wolbrecht. 2012. "A Gender Gap in Policy Representation in the U.S. Congress." COURSE READER

Fenno Jr., Richard F., 2002 (1978). *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. New York, NY: Pearson. Introduction. COURSE READER

**Week 8: Campaign Battleground: The Race for the Presidency / Midterm Exam**

Sides, John, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossman, and Keena Lipsitz. 2014. *Campaigns and Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice*. New York NY: W.W. Norton. Chapters 9. COURSE READER

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Issenberg, Chapter 9: Models and the Matrix

Cann, Damon M. and Jeffrey Bryan Cole. 2011. "Strategic Campaigning, Closeness, and Voter Mobilization in U.S. Presidential Elections." *Electoral Studies* 30(2): 344-352. COURSE READER

Gimpel, James G., Karen M. Kaufmann, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz. 2007. "Battleground States versus Blackout States: The Behavioral Implications of Modern Presidential Campaigns." *Journal of Politics*. 69(3): 786-797. COURSE READER

Kane, Paul. 2015. "Congressional Republicans deflect attacks from their own Presidential candidates." *The Washington Post*.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2015/12/18/congressional-republicans-deflect-attacks-from-their-own-presidential-candidates/> COURSE READER

### **Week 9: External Actors- Political Parties**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 3: External Actors: Parties, Interest Groups, and the Media

Aldrich, John. 2011 [1995] *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America*. Chapter 1: Politics and Parties in America. COURSE READER

Gerber, Elisabeth R. and Rebecca B. Morton, 1998. "Primary Election Systems and Representation." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*. 14(2): 304-324. COURSE READER

Enten, Harry. 2014. "Eric Cantor Upset: What Happened?" *Five Thirty Eight*:  
<http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/the-eric-cantor-upset-what-happened/>. COURSE READER

### **Due at the beginning of the week, Critical Analysis Paper 2**

### **Week 10: External Actors- The Media and Interest Groups**

Bachrach, Peter and Morton S. Baratz, 1962. "Two Faces of Power." *American Political Science Review* 56(4): 947-952. COURSE READER

Brooks, Deborah Jordan and Michael Murov. 2012. "Assessing Accountability in a Post-Citizens United Era: The Effect of Attack Ad Sponsorship by Unknown Independent Groups." *American Politics Research* 40: 383-418. COURSE READER

Morris, Jonathan S. 2007. "Slanted Objectivity? Perceived Media Bias, Cable News Exposure, and Political Attitudes." *Social Science Quarterly* 88(3): 707-728. COURSE READER

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Hayes, Danny. 2010. "The Dynamics of Agenda Convergence and the Paradox of Competiveness in Presidential Campaigns." *Political Research Quarterly*. COURSE READER

### **Week 11: Campaigns and American Political Behavior- Preferences and Vote Choice**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 8: Vote Choice

Druckman, James N. 2004. "Priming the Vote: Campaign Effects in a U.S. Senate Election." *Political Psychology* 25(4): 577-594 COURSE READER

Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quirk, Buddy Peyton, and Jay Verkuilen. 2007. "Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq." *The Journal of Politics* 69(4): 957-974 COURSE READER

Hillygus, D. Sunshine and Todd G. Shields. 2009. *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapter 1 COURSE READER

Krupnikov, Yanna. 2012. "Negative Advertising and Voter Choice: the Role of Ads in Candidate Selection." *Political Communication* 29(4): 387-413 COURSE READER

### **Week 12: Campaigns and American Political Behavior-Participation**

Issenberg, Chapter 7: When Shame Pays a House Call

Brader, Ted, 2005. 'Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions.' *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2): 388-405 COURSE READER

Gerber, Alan S. Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2010. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence From a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33-48 COURSE READER

Panagopoulos, Costas. 2013. "Positive Social Pressure and Prosocial Motivation: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment on Voter Mobilization." *Political Psychology* 34(2): 265-275 COURSE READER

### **Week 13: Federalism**

**Outline of campaign strategy due, 5%**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 2: Layers of Democracy: Federal, State, and Local Campaigns

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Hopkins, Dan., 2014. 'All Politics is Presidential.' *Five Thirty Eight*. Retrieved from: <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/all-politics-is-presidential/> on March 2, 2015.

COURSE READER

Trounstine, Jessica. 2013. "Turnout and Incumbency in Local Elections." *Urban Affairs Review* 49(2): 167-189 COURSE READER

Hajnal, Zoltan and Jessica Trounstine. 2005. "Where Turnout Matters: The Consequences of Uneven Turnout in City Politics." *The Journal of Politics* 67(2): 515-535 COURSE READER

Hogan, Robert E. 2004. "Challenger Emergence, Incumbent Success, and Electoral Accountability in State Legislative Elections." *The Journal of Politics* 66(4): 1283-1303 COURSE READER

### **Week 14: Electoral Institutions and Campaign Strategy**

Panagopoulos, Chapter 10: Contemporary Campaigns and the Evolving Process

Suttman-Lea, Mara. "Towards More Equal Participation? Early Voting, Mobilization, and Turnout Biases" COURSE READER

Burden, Barry C., David T. Canon, Kenneth R. Mayer, and Donald P. Moynihan. 2014. "Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(1): 95-109. COURSE READER

Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. "Early Bird Gets the Delegates. Romney's mastery of early voting made it nearly impossible for his less-organized, less-moneyed rivals to ever beat him." *Slate*.

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/victory\\_lab/2012/03/mitt\\_romney\\_s\\_early\\_voting\\_mastery\\_his\\_rivals\\_never\\_stood\\_a\\_chance\\_.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/03/mitt_romney_s_early_voting_mastery_his_rivals_never_stood_a_chance_.html) COURSE READER

### **Weeks 15-16: Final Project Presentations**

**Individual papers due at the beginning of week 15**



## **Final Project: Campaign Strategy Development and Analysis**

In this course, the overarching goal is to understand and evaluate the relationship between the realities of campaigning in the United States and political actors, institutions, and citizens. To assess whether you have met this goal, you will be given an election scenario, assigned to one candidate or another, and, in small groups, design a feasible campaign strategy. Your strategies will be presented in class during the final weeks of the term. Concurrent with this project and drawing on empirical evidence from the course, you will write an individual paper that assesses your campaign's democratic merit on the basis of how well your decisions promote representation, inform citizens, and engage them in the political process. **Note:** The goal is not to develop a campaign strategy that strikes a balance between these tenants of democracy and your strategy, but rather to design a *winning* strategy that may or may not comport with these tenants.

### **Campaign Strategy- Group Project**

A good strategy will address all components of your given campaign scenario and election year factors and make compelling use of your knowledge of best practices in campaign strategy covered in weeks 2-6 of the course as well as empirical evidence on the effects of different elements of campaign strategy.

Keep the following suggestions in mind as you develop your campaign strategy

1. Make it clear you have done some serious thinking. Do not simply describe the various components of your strategy, but rather demonstrate how you know they will be effective using evidence.
2. Be sure to make your argument about why your campaign strategy will be effective early on in your presentation. This requires you *have* a clear-cut argument about your strategy.
3. Think of your campaign strategy as comprising of different components that work together to support an outcome: winning an election. These components should not stand alone, but should rather support and relate to one another. Each component should contribute a distinct point to your overall argument. You also should consider possible counterarguments or objectives and address them, that is, arguments that might be made as to why yours is not an effective strategy.

### **Critical Analysis- Individual Paper**

A good analysis will draw on relevant evidence and lecture material. Rather than simply recite arguments from the material covered, you should try to advance an argument and offer a critical analysis of your campaign strategy that synthesizes and develops existing evidence to support your argument. A good paper will also address arguments supported by course material that might support an opposing view to your argument and then explain why these arguments are nevertheless unconvincing to you.

Keep the following suggestions in mind as you write your critical analysis.

4. Make it clear you have done some serious thinking. Do not simply list evidence without clearly explaining how it supports your argument about the democratic merits of your campaign strategy.
5. Be sure to make your thesis about the democratic merit of your campaign absolutely clear early in the paper. This requires you *have* a thesis. Try to develop one that can be easily put into a sentence or two. A standard approach is to use your first paragraph to lead up to your thesis statement: this is your opportunity to convey the payoff from your paper. Explain why your thesis makes sense.
6. Think of your critical analysis as a series of paragraphs that build progressively to a coherent argument. Each paragraph should contribute a distinct point to that argument. Support any claims you make with evidence. You also should consider possible counterarguments or objectives and address them.

**Campaign Scenario:** You are an incumbent [challenger] running for reelection in a tightly contested general election race for a seat in the House of Representatives. You identify as a Republican, but the district is made up of a fair mix of Democrats and Republicans, with some Independents. [FOR INCUMBENT]: you narrowly won your previous election bid. [FOR CHALLENGER]: you have held elected office once before in the State House of Representatives. Prior, you worked as a lawyer. You face an uphill battle in terms of name recognition.

**Election Year Factors:**

- There is a Democratic President in the White House.
- Republicans control the House and the Senate, with more conservative Republicans making up a majority of the Republican seats in the House of Representatives.
- It is an off year (mid-term) election
- You are running in a state that allows no-excuse in person early voting and absentee voting, and Election Day registration. You also have access to lists of voters who have requested absentee ballots.
- The economic conditions in the United States are poor, as the country is trying to recover from a recession.

**Questions to consider in developing your campaign strategy:**

- What is the overarching message of your campaign? How will you distinguish yourself from your opponent?
- How will you deliver your message?
- What voters will be most important for you to target with your messaging?
- What is your GOTV (Get out the Vote) plan?

- What voters will be most important for you to target with your GOTV efforts?

**Structure of the Assignment**

- Campaign strategy presentation should include:
  - o A fundraising strategy
  - o A clearly defined campaign message
  - o A tactic for message delivery
  - o A get out the vote strategy
- 5-7 pages- Critical analysis paper of how well your campaign strategy performs on the following dimensions:
  - o Representation of citizens
  - o Informing of citizens
  - o Engagement of citizens