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POLS 330-01, Campaigns and Elections, Fall 2008

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PS 330
Campaigns and Elections
Fall 2008

This course examines the dynamics of elections in contemporary American politics. We will explore how political scientists study electoral politics, what we have learned, and how these academic endeavors apply to political conduct. To this end, we will examine why candidates (and others) think and behave the way they do, the rules that govern their behavior, who wins elections and why, and what difference (if any) campaigns actually make in election outcomes. Finally, we will explore how we might use what we know about campaigns and elections to make them better.

Course Objectives

As a campaigns and elections class, this course should help you:

- 1) Gain factual knowledge about the laws, processes, and participants that shape U.S. campaigns and elections
- 2) Learn to analyze and critically evaluate the major electoral debates, conflicts and issues in politics that political scientists (and citizens) struggle with and try to inform
- 3) Learn how to find and use resources to answer significant research questions about electoral politics
- 4) Become more effective and discriminating observers of and participants in the electoral process

Books and Readings

There are five required books for this course:

- Carroll, Susan J. and Richard Fox, eds. 2006. *Gender and Elections*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herrnson, Paul S. 2004. *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington, 5th edition*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Semiatin, Richard J., ed. 2008. *Campaigns on the Cutting Edge*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Wattenberg, Martin P. 2008. *Is Voting for Young People?*, New York: Pearson Longman.
- Wayne, Stephen J. *Road to the White House 2008*.

All other readings in the course (see below) are also required; most are available in electronic form. For example, articles from *The New York Times* (and most other periodicals) are available online through Rhodes library databases such as Lexis-Nexis. Search for the author names and article titles. Others may be in my PS 330 folder on the academic volume.

In addition to the readings, you should read a national newspaper such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Wall Street Journal* on a daily basis.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade in the course will be determined as follows:

Assignment	% of Final Grade	Due Date(s)
Participation	10%	
Group participation	5%	
Group blog posts (3)	25%	
Individual blog posts (2)	15%	
Primary election paper	20%	October 10
General election paper	25%	November 24

Research Papers

You will each complete two research papers on one of the competitive congressional or senate races in 2008. The basic research question you will address in both papers is: who won and why? To answer this question, you will have to do a comprehensive analysis of the candidates' campaigns, including the campaign strategy, policy issues, the composition of the relevant electorate, and the roles of individuals, interest groups, and parties in the campaign.

For the first paper, you will analyze the dynamics of the primary election contests. For the second, you will analyze the general election campaign and interpret its outcome. For both papers, you will need to incorporate theories of campaigns and elections discussed in class. You will also (obviously) need to do outside research. More information on these papers and how to research them will be distributed later in the semester.

Group Weblog Posts

This class will produce a weblog about the 2008 campaign during the course of the semester. Students in the class will be divided into groups of four to five people. You will have some say about the composition of your group.

Each group will be required to post roughly one article per month, for a total of three articles. Each article should be at most 500 words, with at least two links to web-based articles or other content and one meaningful reference to course content. All should discuss a topic or issue relating to the 2008 federal elections.

All articles must be posted by 10:00 p.m. on the due date indicated below. The entire group will receive the same grade for the article and late articles will be penalized 10%. Articles submitted more than 24 hours late will not receive credit.

	Due Dates for Group Posts		
Group 1	September 8	October 8	November 7
Group 2	September 12	October 13	November 14
Group 3	September 17	October 17	November 17
Group 4	September 22	October 24	November 21
Group 5	October 3	November 3	December 3

Individual Weblog Posts

Over the course of the semester, you will also be expected to post two shorter, individual articles about the 2008 federal elections. (You might, for example, choose to blog about the race you're following for your research paper.) These posts should be 150-200 words, with at least one link to web-based content. Meaningful incorporation of course content is strongly encouraged and favorably regarded. More than two posts will not be graded, but may be factored favorably into your participation grade.

You will choose a week for each of your individual posts for the semester. This means you must make your post sometime between 9:00 a.m. Monday and 10 p.m. Friday of that week. Late posts will be penalized 10% and posts submitted more than 24 hours late will not receive credit.

Grading

I grade on the following scale: 90-100 is A-range, 80-89 is B-range, 70-79 is C-range, 60-69 is D-range, and below 60 is an F. Not turning in an assignment will result in a 0 for that assignment. I reserve the right to raise (or lower) your final grade by up to one third of a letter grade based on a pattern of continuing improvement (or regression) during the semester.

Late Assignments and Extensions

As a rule, I do not accept late written assignments or give extensions. The only exceptions may be in cases of documented medical emergencies. Extracurricular commitments, computer problems, and family and job obligations can be anticipated and managed.

Any paper that I do not physically have in my hands at ten minutes past the hour at which the class starts (according to my watch) on the day the paper is due is considered late and will not be accepted, per my rule above.

Finally, I reserve the right to make changes to assignments, readings, and due dates as I see fit, but with fair warning.

Academic Support

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x3994 as soon as possible. The SDS website (<http://www.rhodes.edu/disability>) provides detailed information about Rhodes' policies and procedures in this regard.

Rhodes also has a variety of academic support services including:

- Peer tutors (this course will have one; stay tuned for more details)
- A Writing Center (315 Palmer Hall and on line at: <http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter>)
- Workshops in study skills assistance (contact the Office of Student Academic Support at x3433 for more information)

Class Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance is critical to effective participation. Although near perfect attendance is expected, I do realize that there may come a day when you need to miss class. Therefore:

- You may accrue up to three absences over the course of the semester with impunity.
- A fourth absence will result in a maximum participation grade of 75%. Additional absences will lower the participation grade further.

In other words, you may miss as many as three class periods *for whatever reason* over the course of the semester without being penalized. There are, therefore, no such things as “excused” or “unexcused” absences. I assume all reasons for missing class are good ones; I do not need them explained. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for the readings, lecture material, and other assignments for that day.

Although near perfect attendance is expected, it is not the same as participation. Learning is not a spectator sport. Fundamentally, the responsibility to learn is yours; you must take an active role in the process. Consequently, I expect you to come to class prepared and ready to learn, meaning you have done the assigned reading before class, considered it in light of the study questions, and have questions and/or ideas of your own about it in mind. Being prepared for class enables you to construct a knowledge base on which subsequent learning rests. It also makes class more productive, purposive and enjoyable for everyone.

Class participation is not limited to discussion. You may also be asked to lead a brief discussion, take part in small group activity, etc. This is part and parcel of class participation and is required.

Finally, 5% of your final grade will be determined by the quality of your participation in your blogging groups. Your group peers will be evaluating you in this area.

Academic Dishonesty

Quite simply, any type of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will not be tolerated. You are responsible for knowing the Rhodes College Honor Code, and its rules and regulations concerning these matters. Please read them carefully (see the Rhodes College Honor Council Constitution at:

<http://www.rhodes.edu/Rhodes/CampusCommunity/PoliciesandProcedures/Student-Handbook.cfm>).

In any case, ignorance of the law is not an excuse. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be referred immediately to the Honor Council.

Contacting Me

I have office hours every week (see page 1). During that time, unless otherwise announced, I am in my office (305 Buckman) and at your disposal. I strongly encourage

you to drop by with any questions or concerns about the course, or if you want to discuss topics including, but not limited to: political science, politics, Brett Favre's "retirement," and/or why you should not go to law school.

You may also contact me by email, but be forewarned: I do not always check my email every day, nor do I usually check it at all on weekends. Therefore, unless I make specific arrangements with you to the contrary, it may take a few days for you to receive a response.

Class Schedule

Wed. 8/27: Introduction

Fri. 8/29: Elections and Democratic Theory

- Madison, James. Federalist #10 (excerpt). Available online at: <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm> (Read from the paragraph starting "From this view of the subject. . .")
- McWilliams, Wilson Carey. 2000. *Beyond the Politics of Disappointment*. New York: Chatham House (pp.1-8).

Mon. 9/1: No Class (Labor Day)

Wed. 9/3: Elections and Democratic Theory

- Kent, Frank R. 1930. *The Great Game of Politics*. New York: Doubleday (pp. 195-204)
- Simpson, "Chapter 12: Campaigns and Democracy—Into a New Era" in *Semiatin*

Fri. 9/5: Writing the Research Papers

- Consult the most recent charts of competitive House and Senate races on the Cook Political Report's website (www.cookpolitical.com).
- Looking at the "Toss Up" columns (i.e. at the most competitive races), select three races that you would be interested in examining for your research papers. This will no doubt require some preliminary research.
- Come to class with your list of three races (clearly indicated and rank ordered) and a brief synopsis of each race and what you find interesting about each them (i.e. why you want to spend the rest of the semester thinking about them)

Mon. 9/8: Voter Turnout and Decision Making

- Wayne, Chapter 3, pp.75-88

Wed. 9/10: Voter Turnout and Decision Making

- Wattenberg, Introduction and Chapters 1-4

Fri. 9/12: Voter Turnout and Decision Making

- Wattenberg, Introduction and Chapters 5-6
- Stelter, Brian. 2008. "Television Starts to Court the Young Voter." *The New York Times* (August 17) Available on-line at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/18/business/media/18youth.html?_r=1&sq=young%20voters&st=cse&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&scp=1&adxnnlx=1219177555-aJoDer3KwHq/aGKqoWVotg

- *Young Voter Registration and Turnout Trends*, pp. 1-15. Available at: http://www.rockthevote.com/assets/publications/research/young_voter_registration_and_turnout_trends-2008.pdf

Mon. 9/15: Voter Turnout and Decision Making

- Wayne, Chapter 3, pp.88-107

Wed. 9/17: Congressional Elections

- Herrnson, Chapter 1

Fri. 9/19: Congressional Elections

- Herrnson, Chapter 2

Mon. 9/22: Congressional Elections

- Herrnson, Chapter 6

Wed. 9/24: Congressional Elections

- Herrnson, Chapter 9

Fri. 9/26: Congressional Elections

- Watch *Vote for Me! Part 4 (The Political Education of Maggie Lauterer)*

Mon. 9/29: Identity and Strategy

- Introduction, pp. 1-7 in *Gender and Elections*, Carroll and Fox, eds.
- Fox, Chapter 4: "Congressional Elections: Where Are We on the Road to Gender Parity?"

Wed. 10/1: Identity and Strategy

- Duerest-Lahti, Chapter 1: "Presidential Elections: Gendered Space and the Case of 2004" in *Gender and Elections*, Carroll and Fox, eds.
- Carroll, Chapter 3: "Voting Choices: Meet You at the Gender Gap" in *Gender and Elections*, Carroll and Fox, eds.

Fri. 10/3: Identity and Strategy

- Highton, Benjamin. 2004. "White Voters and African-American Candidates for Congress." *Political Behavior* (March) (JSTOR or PS 330 folder)
- Cohen and Agiesta. 2008. "3 in 10 Americans Admit to Race Bias." *The Washington Post* (June 22) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/21/AR2008062101825.html?hpid=topnews>

Mon. 10/6: Identity and Strategy

- Applebaum. "Black is Electable." *Slate.com* (January 7) <http://www.slate.com/id/2181494/>

- Bai, Matt. 2008. "Is Obama the End of Black Politics?" *The New York Times* (August 10) (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/magazine/10politics-t.html?nl=pol&emc=polb1>)

Wed. 10/8: Identity and Strategy

- Watch the documentary film *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1986). Available in the Media Center.
- Herrick and Thomas, "The Effects of Sexual Orientation on Citizen Perceptions of Candidate Viability" in *Gays and Lesbians in the Democratic Process*, Riggle and Tadlock, eds.

Fri. 10/10: Primary Election Analysis

- PRIMARY ELECTION ANALYSIS PAPERS ARE DUE
- Come prepared to discuss your findings

Mon. 10/13: Presidential Elections

- Wayne, Chapter 1 (Presidential Selection: A Historical Overview)

Wed. 10/15: Presidential Elections

- Wayne, Chapter 2 (Campaign Finance)

Fri. 10/17: Presidential Elections

- Wayne, Chapter 4 (Party Rules and their Impact: The Legal Environment)

Mon. 10/20: No Class (Fall Break)

Wed. 10/22: Presidential Elections

- Wayne, Chapter 5 (Campaigning for the Nomination)

Fri. 10/24: Presidential Elections

- Wayne, Chapter 6 (Spring Interregnum)

Mon. 10/27: Presidential Elections

- Wayne, Chapter 7 (Organization, Strategy and Tactics)

Wed. 10/29: Staff and Surrogates

- Watch the documentary film *Staffers '04*. Available in the Media Center
- Herrnson, Chapter 3
- Watch the documentary film *The War Room* (1992). Available in the Media Center.

Fri. 10/31: Political Parties

- Herrnson, Chapter 4, pp.87-105

Mon. 11/3: Political Parties

- Herrnson, Chapter 4, pp. 105-131

Wed. 11/5: Post-Election Analysis

- Read and watch copious election coverage

Fri. 11/7: Interest Groups

- Herrnson, Chapter 5

Mon. 11/10: Interest Groups

- Kasniunas and Rozell, “Chapter 8: Interest Groups and the Future of Campaigns” in Semiatin
- Goldberg, Michelle. 2003. “MoveOn Moves Up.” *Salon.com* (December 1). Available on-line at:
<http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2003/12/01/moveon/>
- Luo, Michael. 2008. “Ready to Attack Obama, if Some Money Arrives.” *The New York Times* (June 21)

Wed. 11/12: “Earned” Media

- Wayne, Chapter 8, pp. 254-275
- Herrnson, pp. 235-240

Fri. 11/14: “Earned” Media

- Graf, “Chapter 5: New Media—The Cutting Edge of Campaign Communications” in Semiatin
- Kakutani, Michiko. 2008. “Is John Stewart the Most Trusted Man in America?” *The New York Times* (August 17)

Mon. 11/17: “Earned” Media

- Seelye, Katharine. 2007 “New Presidential Debate Site? Clearly YouTube.” *The New York Times* (June 13)
- Cohen, Adam. 2006. “Could a 15-Year-Old With a Laptop be the New Campaign Media Guru.” *The New York Times* (June 14).
- Watch Lowery’s video at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6PIerf1r7Q&search=ava%20lowery>

Wed. 11/19: Paid Media

- Devine, “Paid Media—In an Era of Revolutionary Change” in Semiatin
- Herrnson, Chapter 8, pp. 221-285

Fri. 11/21: Paid Media

- Wayne, Chapter 8, pp. 275-289

Mon. 11/24: General Election Analysis

- GENERAL ELECTION PAPERS DUE
- Come prepared to discuss your findings

Wed. 11/26 No Class (Thanksgiving)

Fri. 11/28: No Class (Thanksgiving)

Mon. 12/1: The Ground War

- Semiatin, “Voter Mobilization—Into the Future” in Semiatin
- Rutenberg, Jim and Christopher Drew. 2008. “National Push by Obama on Ads and Turnout.” *The New York Times* (June 22)
- Hulse, Carl. 2008. “Democrats Use a Personal Touch to Coax Voters in Congressional Races.” *The New York Times* (August 18)

Wed. 12/3: Reform: Campaign Finance

- Francia et al. “Chapter 10: Campaign Finance Reform—Present and Future” in Semiatin.
- Wayne, Chapter 10, pp.350-354

Fri. 12/5: Reform: The Nomination Process

- Wayne, Chapter 10, pp. 343-350
- Little, Wesley. 2008. “What if Democrats Used Winner-Take-All?” *Rasmussen Reports* (April 3). Available at:
http://rasmussenreports.com/public_content/political_commentary/commentary_by_wesley_little/what_if_democrats_used_winner_take_all

Mon. 12/8: Reform: Voting

- Niemi, Richard G., and Paul S. Hernnson. 2003. “Beyond the Butterfly: The Complexity of U.S. Ballots.” *Perspectives on Politics* 2: 317-326. (Available in my public folder on the server as Niemi.pdf)
- Renner, “Chapter 11: Election Administration—Trends in the Twenty-First Century” in Semiatin.

Wed. 12/10: Campaign Influence and Wrap Up

- Watch the documentary film *Street Fight* (2005). Available in the Media Center.