

# GOV 205

## Campaigns and Elections

Fall 2007  
Kanbar 107  
Tuesday and Thursday, 2:30-3:55pm

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### Office Hours:

Tuesday, 1pm-2:30pm  
Thursday, 10am-Noon  
And by appointment

This course introduces current theories and controversies concerning political campaigns and elections in the United States. We take advantage of the fact that the class meets during the run-up to the 2008 presidential primary season, and students are expected to follow journalistic accounts of the primary campaigns closely. The course is split into two major parts. **First**, we consider the style and structure of American campaigns. For example, we ask how campaigns have changed in the last fifty years, especially concerning the role of parties, the presence of incumbency advantage, and the role of money. In addition, we consider why candidates decide to run, how they position themselves on important issues, and how they design their campaign messages. We also cover the importance of campaign polling, and the tricky task of forecasting election outcomes. **Second**, we explore the impact of campaigns on voters. For example, we ask whether campaigns ever convince voters to change their opinion, or whether demographic and socioeconomic factors explain most political behavior. We spend considerable time on the effectiveness of campaign advertisements. The goal of the course is to review the importance of elections in American politics, and to provide the tools to make normative judgments about the health of American democracy.

### Course Requirements

There are 5 major components to your grade:

1. **Five reading reactions** (15 points; each worth 3 points)—these are short reactions of about 2 pages (double-spaced). I will evaluate these on the basis of how well you react to the readings (namely, originality of thought and conciseness). There are no right or wrong answers, but I will challenge you to think logically. These papers are due **in class** on Thursdays, and they should focus on the readings for that week; simply reiterating the discussions in class is not enough. Because there are only 5 of them, you can choose which weeks you want to turn them in.  
\*You may NOT hand in more than one reaction paper in a week  
\*\*You must hand in reaction papers in class; late papers or emailed papers will NOT be accepted  
\*\*\*You cannot hand in a reading reaction on the week of the midterm, the week of Thanksgiving, or the final week of classes.

2. **Participation** (10 points)—this includes attendance and class participation. Attendance is required, and I will take regular note of who is and who is not in class. I understand that people get sick, have doctor's appointments, and so on, but I will only grant excused absences in rare circumstances. Be advised, simple attendance is not sufficient; I will also evaluate you on your comments in class (as well as your participation on Blackboard—more on that below), and I urge you to ask questions in lecture or express your opinion.  
\*To facilitate participation, I will also assign each of you at least one presidential campaign. You are responsible for following the campaign closely. I will usually begin each class by calling on a few of you, and asking you to report to the class on the current state of the candidate's campaign (i.e., major issues and controversies; current polling data; recent debates or campaign gaffes).
3. **Midterm Exam** (30 points) — scheduled for Thursday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. It will be an in-class essay exam dealing with the readings *and lectures* up through October 18<sup>th</sup>. Note that class on October 23<sup>rd</sup> will be review. The exam will consist of 10 concepts, and 2 essay questions. You will pick 7 of the 10 concepts and provide a definition and significance; you will answer 1 of the 2 essays.
4. **Final Exam** (30 points) — an in-class essay exam that is NOT cumulative; it is on the lectures and readings for all classes after the mid-term. Note that the last class of the semester will be review. The format of the final exam is the same as the mid-term.
5. **Final project** (15 points) — a campaign memo written as a group. Because there are so few presidential candidates (at least in comparison to the size of the class!), there will be a number of students assigned to the same candidate. You will be responsible for meeting as a group and writing a **5-page** (double-spaced) strategy memo (5 pages total, and no more!) for your candidate. You have free rein on what to put in the memo, and it will likely depend on the status of the candidate's campaign. If, for some reason, the candidate has already dropped out of the race, the memo should contain advice on what to do now (i.e., with campaign funds, or who to support). *Good memos will make reference to class concepts!!*  
\*All members of the group will receive the same grade, so be sure to work together.  
\*\*Memos are due in class on December 4<sup>th</sup>, and each group will present to the class a brief summary of their recommendations to the candidate. Be advised, other students in the class are free to question the group on its recommendations.

## Readings

There are four books for this course, and a number of outside articles. The books are available through the campus bookstore, and all of the outside readings are on electronic reserve (which can be accessed through Blackboard and the library website).

1. *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition), by Gary Jacobson. Pearson Longman.
2. *No Holds Barred: Negativity in U.S. Senate Campaigns*, by Kim Fridkin Kahn and Patrick Kenney. Pearson Prentice Hall.
3. *Do Campaigns Matter?*, by Thomas Holbrook. Sage.
4. *The Advance Man: An Off-beat Look at What Really Happens in Political Campaigns*, by Jerry Bruno and Jeff Greenfield. Bantam Books. [This is sold as a course pack]

## Other Issues

1. I expect all students to abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code, which can be accessed online at <http://library.bowdoin.edu/>. Click on "Get Started," and then "Concerning Plagiarism." If you have any concerns or questions about how to cite work appropriately, please consult me or a reference librarian.
2. I will make use of Blackboard to convey information and class discussion topics. I have also posted the syllabus there, and I encourage you to check the course page frequently. In particular, I have set up a number of discussion forums. I hope you take advantage of these forums to pass on important information to your classmates about the upcoming presidential and congressional elections. ***Although participation on these discussion boards is not mandatory, it will significantly help your participation grade if you are a contributor.***
3. If you have chosen to take the class as Credit/D/F, I will only grant a Credit grade if the student has completed all of the work for the class. This means completing all five reading reactions, the strategy memo, and both exams.

## Part 1—Style and Structure of American Campaigns

August 30—Syllabus handed out (I am away for a conference on this day)

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September 4—American Electoral System

- Jacobson, Chapter 2
- Joel Silbey. 2002. "'Essential to the Existence of Our Institutions' to 'Rapacious Enemies of Honest and Responsible Government,'" in *The Parties Respond*, L. Sandy Maisel (ed.)

September 6— Party-centered and Candidate-centered Campaigns

- *Advance Man*, by Jerry Bruno and Jeff Greenfield
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September 11—When to Run for Office

- Cherie Maestas, Sarah Fulton, L. Sandy Maisel, and Walter Stone. 2006. "When To Risk It? Institutions, Ambitions, and the Decision to Run for the U.S. House," *American Political Science Review*. 100(2): 195-208.

September 13—Incumbents, Challengers, and the Vanishing Marginal

- Jacobson, Chapter 3
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September 18—Candidate Positioning

- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James Snyder and Charles Stewart. 2001. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1):136-159

September 20—Campaign Finance

- Jacobson, Chapter 4
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September 25—Consultants and Campaign Organizations

- Paul Herrnsen. 1992. “Campaign Professionalism and Fundraising in Congressional Elections,” *Journal of Politics*. 54(3): 859-870.

September 27—Paid Media and Going Negative

- Michael Franz, Joel Rivlin, and Kenneth Goldstein. 2006. “Much More of the Same: Television Advertising Pre- and Post-BCRA,” in *The Election After Reform*.
  - Kahn and Kenney, Chapters 1-2
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October 2—Campaigns and Free Media

- Kahn and Kenney, Chapter 3

October 4—Forecasting Elections

- Edward Tufte. 1975. “Determinants of the Outcomes of Midterm Congressional Elections,” *American Political Science Review*. 69: 812-826.
  - Jacobson, Chapter 6
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October 9— No class (Fall Vacation)

October 11— National Politics and Congressional Elections

- Jacobson, Chapter 6
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October 16— Polling

- Jesse Marquette. 1996. “How to Become a Wise Consumer of Campaign Polling,” in *Campaign Craft*, Daniel Shea (ed.).

October 18— In-Class Exercise

- *Review Sheet for Mid-term Exam handed out*
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October 23—Mid-term Review

October 25— Mid-term Exam

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## **Part 2— The Effects of Campaigns**

October 30—Congressional Voters

- Jacobson, Chapter 5

November 1— Congressional Voters, cont.

- Jacobson, Chapter 5
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November 6 — The Puzzle of Campaign Effects

- Holbrook, Chapters 1-2

*Movie Night*  
(7pm in Shannon Room—Hubbard Hall)  
(If you come, it counts as one full credit reaction paper)

November 8—A Model of Campaign Effects

- Holbrook, Chapter 3
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November 13—Conventions and Debates

- Holbrook, Chapters 4-5

November 15—Campaign Events and National Conditions

- Holbrook, Chapters 6-7
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November 20—Paid Media: Do Ads Inform?

- Kahn and Kenney, Chapter 4

November 22—No class (Thanksgiving)

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November 27—Paid Media: Do Ads Change Beliefs and Behavior?

- Kahn and Kenney, Chapters 5-6

November 29—Free Media

- Daron Shaw, “The Impact of News Media Favorability and Candidate Events in Presidential Campaigns,” *Political Communication*. 16:183-202.
  - Marc J. Hetherington. 1996. “The Media's Role in Forming Voters' National Economic Evaluations in 1992,” *American Journal of Political Science*. 40(2): 372-395.
  - *Review Sheet for Final Exam handed out*
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December 4—Presentation of Campaign Memos

- *Memos due in class*

December 6— Review for Final Exam

- *Graded campaign memos can be picked up during reading period*

**Final Exam:** Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am