

Political Science 302
CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS
Fall 2024

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2:00-3:00; and by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the role of elections in the American political system. We will explore elections—what candidates do to get elected and how voters decide for whom to vote—for both president and Congress. We will also examine the role of race and gender in elections, electoral systems, the polarized electorate, and proposals for improving our democracy.

Readings

Campaigns & Elections 4th edition election update by John Sides et al.
The Bitter End, by John Sides, Chris Tausanovitch, and Lynn Vavreck
NCSU Libraries online reserve (* indicates required readings; ^ indicates recommended)
The New York Times, *The Washington Post*, *FiveThirtyEight*

Requirements and Grading

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- Midterm 20%
- Final Exam 25%
- Paper Assignment #1 20%
- Paper Assignments #2 25%
- Participation 10%

Class Participation

Class participation is an *integral* part of the class. At minimum, this means good attendance. Students are also expected to be attentive during lectures and to ask questions and contribute comments to class discussions. *You should come to each class having read the required assignment and prepared to discuss and/or write about the issues raised by the readings.* It is also your responsibility to remain abreast of current events in American politics, especially as they apply to campaigns and elections. You should read daily election coverage in the New York Times, Washington Post, and FiveThirtyEight. If you want to receive an A for participation, you need to 1) have excellent attendance; 2) contribute regularly to class discussions, and; 3) demonstrate knowledge of assigned readings and current events, especially during in-class writing assignments.

Course Webpage

The webpage for this course is located at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS302>. This webpage is an important resource for this class. It will contain archived lecture outlines, important links to additional resources for the paper assignments, and important class announcements.

Assignments

Paper #1: Election Reform

Propose and defend a reform to the electoral system—e.g., to the Electoral College, the redistricting process, campaign finance, voter registration, primaries, or any other aspect of American campaigns and elections (if you are unsure about your idea, ask me). Why is this reform needed? How would it be implemented? What are the potential benefits as well as negatives of the reform? How does this reform improve American democracy? How likely is it that this reform could successfully take place? Make sure your paper reflects PS 302 knowledge throughout. 7 pages maximum.

Metacognitive self-reflection: Answer the following questions in approximately two additional pages. How/why did you choose the sources you did? Which were most valuable and why? How did your understanding of the issue change over the course of working on the assignment? What do you think are the strongest and weakest aspects of your argument? What is something doing this research made you want to learn more about?

You are responsible for the full details of the assignment available at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS302/paper1.htm>. **Due September 24.**

Paper #2: Presidential Election State Analysis

Choose a “swing state” (other than NC), which both campaigns contested. Analyze why the presidential outcome turned out as it did in this state. What were the major factors explaining the outcome? How did the outcome compare to 2020 and what accounts for the difference? How did the historical, demographic, and ideological features of the state affect the outcome? What was the role of the campaign (spending, ads, visits, issue emphases, voter mobilization) in this state? How did national factors play out in your state? What other factors that we learned about in class helped shape the outcome in this state?

Metacognitive self-reflection: same as paper #1

You are responsible for the full details of the assignment available at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS302/paper2.htm>.

[No more than 6 papers for any single state—first come, first served]
7 Pages Maximum. **Due November 21.**

General Information: Policies regarding all paper assignments can be found at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS302/PaperGuidelines.htm>. You are expected to read these guidelines before submitting your paper.

Late Policy

It is expected that exams will be taken and assignments turned in when they are scheduled on the syllabus. There will be a 20-point penalty for failure to take an exam at the required time and a 1/3 letter grade per day penalty for written assignments. If you miss an exam, the re-scheduling must take place at the convenience of the instructor. Written assignments are due at the *beginning* of class. To avoid penalties you need to let the instructor know of valid, exigent circumstances *before* the assigned time.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to complete their assignments with due regard to academic integrity. In order to do so they should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of the student code of conduct (Sections 7-13). By signing all work submitted on paper, or by identifying themselves in work submitted electronically, students affirm that they neither gave nor received unauthorized aid. Collaboration on assignments among students may only occur when explicitly authorized by an instructor.

Disability

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. NCSU policy at:

http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REGo2.20.1.php

Schedule of Topics and Assigned Readings

August 20

Course Introduction

August 22 – 29

Presidential Nomination Campaigns

Sides et al., Chapter 9 (first half)

La Raja and Rauch, “Voters Need Help...”*

Grossman, “Changing how we elect presidents”*

Noel, “There Is a Better Way to Pick a Presidential Nominee”*

Rauch, “The Party is not over”*

August 30

The Electoral Context

Sides et al., chapters 1 – 2

Wegman, “Gerrymander, USA”*

Drutman, “When We Lose Competitive Congressional Districts”*

American Progress, “It’s Time To Talk About Electoral Reform”*

Halpern, “America’s redistricting process is breaking democracy”^

September 5

(no classroom meeting)

(assignment in Moodle)

Thinking like a Political Scientist about Campaigns & Elections

Noel, “10 Things Political Scientists know that you don’t”*

Klein, “How politics makes us stupid”*

Matthews, “The book that changed how I think about thinking”*

Hidden Brain, “The Double Standard”*

Cohn, “Polls May Shape Biden’s Future. Are They Up to the Job?”^

Skelley, “Polling isn’t broken, but pollsters still face Trump-era challenges”^

September 10 – 12

Voter Participation/Elections and Democracy

Sides et al., chapter 12

DeSilver, “In past elections, U.S. trailed most countries in voter turnout”*

Hasen, “How to Actually Guarantee the Right to Vote”*

Hasen, “I’m an Election Law Expert. Here’s What I Fear Most in 2024.”*

Cohn, “If Everyone Voted, Would Biden Benefit? Not Anymore.”*

September 17

Wellness Day (no class)

September 19 – 24

Party Identification/Polarization

Sides et al., chapter 6

Pew, “Changing Partisan Coalitions in a Politically Divided Nation”*

Mounk, “The Rise of McPolitics”*

Klar, “9 myths about independent voters, debunked”*

Ornstein, “Why America’s Political Divisions Will Only Get Worse”*

Edsall, “Political Scientists Want to Know Why We Hate One Another...”*

Klein, “Ezra Klein Interviews Lilliana Mason”^

Klein, “The Biggest Political Divide is not Between Left and Right”^

Paper #1 due September 24

September 26 – Oct 3	Presidential General Election Campaigns Sides et al., Chapter 5, chapter 9 (second half) Matthews, “How important is door-knocking, anyway?”* Shapiro, “Do political ads even work?”* Brownstein, “Can Harris Reassemble Obama’s Coalition?”* Grossman, “When Information About Candidates Persuades Voters”*
October 8	Mass Media and Election coverage Sides et al. Chapter 8 Patterson, “A Tale of Two Elections”*
October 10	Midterm Exam
October 15	Fall Break (no class)
October 17 –22	Congressional Campaigns Sides et al., chapter 10, chapter 3 (4 th era to present) Matthews, “A massive new study reviews the evidence on whether...”* Sides et al., “TV Ads Still Win Elections”* Grossman, “Does the 2022 election show how Democratic campaigns win?”* Troiano, “Party Primaries Must Go”*
October 24	Race, gender, and campaigns Grossman, “Racial minorities can win elections. Here’s what’s...”* Fox and Lawless, “The Invincible Gender Gap in Political Ambition”* Bacon, “Why The Republican Party Elects So Few Women”* McGrath, “Are Voters Biased Against Women Candidates?”*
October 29	Guest speaker: Sarah Crawford
October 31 – Nov 5	Financing Political Campaigns Sides et al., Chapter 4 Matthews, “The great money-in-politics myth”* Edsall, “After Citizens United, a Vicious Cycle of Corruption”* Edsall, “The Changing Shape of the Parties Is Changing Where...”* Drutman, “Giving the two parties even more money will not solve”* Edsall, “For \$200, a Person Can Fuel the Decline of Our Major Parties”*
November 7	Post-election analysis Read everything you can ☺
November 12– 14	Vote Choice: Social Groups and Partisanship Sides et al., Chapter 13 Brownstein, “The Most Complete Picture of America’s Changing Electorate”* Bacon, “American Politics Now Has Two Big Racial Divides”* Levitz, “David Shor on Why Trump Was Good for the GOP”^
November 19 – 21	Book Club (part I) <i>Bitter End</i> , chapters 1 – 7 <i>Paper #2 due November 21</i>

November 26

Book Club (part II)

Bitter End, chapters 8 – 9

November 28

Thanksgiving

December 3

Wrap-up/Where do we go from here?

Drutman, "How Much Longer Can This Era Of Political Gridlock Last?"*

Grossman, "A long-term success strategy for Democrats"*

Ruffini, "The Emerging Working-Class Republican Majority"*

Bronner and Rakich, "Advantage, GOP"*

December 10, 1-2:30pm Final Exam