

## **POSC-4216: CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS SEMINAR**

**Summer 2021**

Instructor: Boris Heersink

[bheersink@fordham.edu](mailto:bheersink@fordham.edu)

[www.borisheersink.com](http://www.borisheersink.com)

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

### **Course Description**

*Aim of the Course:* In a representative democracy, elections are the most important and direct opportunity for citizens to influence the kind of policies their government will enact in their name. Yet, what elections look like, which voters get to participate, and how candidates and parties (try to) persuade voters to turn out and vote for them has changed dramatically over time. Additionally, within political science, major disagreements exist as to how campaigns and elections influence electoral outcomes. With the close presidential election of 2020 behind us, this course will try to provide you with an understanding of how elections and campaigns have changed over time, and how political scientists try to measure the impact of campaigns on voting behavior. It will also help you understand how the design of political institutions influences electoral outcomes, how it benefits or limits the political influence of specific groups in American society, and familiarize you with the different views that exist within political science as to the influence of campaigns on voting behavior. Combined, this course should provide you with tools to better understand elections and campaigns as they occur in real time.

### **Design and Rules of the Course**

**Please read the below sections of the syllabus carefully.**

*Covid-19 and Online Education:* Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, this course will be taught entirely online. This means that, inevitably, the course will not work the way it would if we were able to all be together in the same room. However, my goal is to replicate the different components of a 'normal' course as much as possible. This means this online course will include the elements that usually would be part of the course, including lectures on the topics, assessments of whether students are following those lectures and doing the readings, and regular opportunities for students to ask me questions and present their thoughts on the topics we are talking about.

The pandemic has thus far affected all of us in some way, though of course the extent to which it has is likely to be different for each of us. However, I imagine that at this point we are all, if nothing else, tired, frustrated, and facing all types of motivational issues. This is completely understandable. And of course some of us may be dealing with much more

serious possible issues caused by Covid-19 – including its effect on our own physical and mental health, that of our family and other loved ones, as well as any economic struggles caused by the pandemic. Designing a course in these circumstances is complicated. On the one hand, I want this course to be meaningful and to teach you the same things I would teach if we were meeting in person. I also hope that you participating in a course that is (hopefully!) interesting can serve as a helpful distraction from everything else going on. On the other hand, I am fully aware that the issues mentioned above can make participation in the course to the best of your ability difficult.

While I care about your performance in the course, I care more about your physical and mental well-being. I also understand that many students face obstacles in their ability to study – including limited access to the internet, having trouble finding a place to study or take online classes, changing work hours, and health scares. Pre-empting each of those issues in a course design is almost impossible, but I have tried to design the course in such a way that there is some level of flexibility in when you will be able to take in the materials. The one exception concerns our Zoom meetings during our scheduled class time. If you encounter anything during the summer session that makes it impossible for you to keep up with the pace of the course and/or to attend the Zoom meetings, **please reach out to me**. We can try to figure out ways to help you get through the course, but I can only do that if you talk to me and let me know what you need help with.

*Class Components:* The course exists of three broad components: (1) readings and non-synchronous video lectures, (2) assignments intended to test you incorporating the material and allowing you to discuss it with other students, (3) Zoom meetings on Monday and Wednesday during which we will discuss the course material for that day.

The non-synchronous materials are all available on Blackboard (under Content), divided up by class day. The daily modules include PDFs of the readings, the lecture videos, the slides used in the lecture videos, and a link to the assignments for that day. The assignments exist of two components; a short multiple-choice test on the basis of material discussed during the lecture videos, and a link to a discussion forum on Blackboard where you can respond to my questions and other students' comments, or raise your own questions. You are expected to complete all the non-synchronous materials and assignments *before* the start of the relevant Zoom session. I.e., for the materials listed for July 7 you must finish the readings, watch the lecture videos, take the quiz, and participate on the forum before the start of your Zoom class on that day.

The synchronous meetings will take place during our scheduled class time (Monday and Wednesday, 9-12 AM). We will meet in two separate groups for one hour each. The reason for this is that longer Zoom meetings with a larger group of people tend to be harder to focus on. By limiting the time and the number of participants, and by sharing some of the information through other formats (like the lecture videos) I am hoping to avoid Zoom burnout.

The meetings will take places as follows:

**Group 1:** Monday and Wednesday, 9:30-10:30 AM

**Group 2:** Monday and Wednesday, 10:45-11:45 AM

I will inform you of which group you are part of before the start of the summer session. If you have very strong preferences for being in one group or the other, please let me know through email.

To create an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating and have the ability to achieve their full potential, civility during the discussions is vital. During our conversations we will inevitably come to talk about day to day politics, and it is very much possible that you will find yourself disagreeing strongly with points put forward by your fellow students (and, they with you!). While you should absolutely feel free to challenge other students, it is crucial that you should do so in a respectful way (and, of course, you can expect the same of your fellow students towards you).

If for some reason you cannot be present for understandable reasons (illness, personal circumstances clearly beyond your control, etc.) you should contact me as soon as you can (if at all possible, before the start of class). Note that in line with Fordham's attendance policy there is a maximum number of absences that would result in failing the course. Given that we find ourselves in a much more complex time than usual, I do not intend to follow this rule as it is listed, but there is a point where absences will negatively affect your final grade or could result in failing the course outright.

*Office Hours:* If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can schedule a Zoom meeting on **Monday and Wednesday between 2:00 and 3:00 PM**. If you want to meet but cannot make that time, send me an e-mail and we will schedule a meeting. You can also e-mail me with any questions or concerns. I am also available to chat after our Zoom meetings. You should not feel like you can only schedule a meeting if you have really specific questions: it is totally fine if you just want to talk about the course (or anything else going on) more broadly.

### Grade

*Components:* Your grade is based on participation on the quizzes, message boards, and in the Zoom meetings (30%), two reading response papers (15% each), and a research proposal paper (40%).

The reading response papers are 2.5 page double-spaced papers in which you will have to respond to the readings of that day. Your response should include two components: the first component (roughly one page) is a summary of the reading(s) you are responding to, which includes the claims the author(s) are making, the methodological approach they rely on in testing their claims, and their main conclusion. The second component concerns your assessment of the reading(s). That is, what did you make of the material? You may have questions or concerns about the way authors came about testing their claims. You may have new questions on the basis of the readings we did. The second part of your response paper is about you showing you thought about the readings and can either criticize them, or build

on them with ideas for future research. The reading response papers are due on **July 14** and **July 21**.

The research proposal will exist of a 10-page double-spaced paper engaging a specific puzzle regarding campaigns and elections in relation to the readings you will read in this course. Note that this paper concerns a proposal of a research project – it is not about actually executing the project, but about producing a paper presenting a clear research question regarding campaigns and elections that *could* be executed. The grade you receive for the paper as a whole is based on an initial one-page proposal (20% of the total paper grade – due on **July 28**), and the final paper you submit at the end of the semester (80% - due **August 5**).

*Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade:* For your assignments and participation you will receive a single letter grade which follows the point value outlined below.

Letter Grade	Points toward Final Grade
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D	1.0
F	0.0

Your final grade is based on a weighted average of each of the points earned towards your final grade based on the percentages outlined above. For example, if you received a B+ for participation, that earns you  $3.3 * 0.30 = 0.99$  points towards your final grade. Similarly, an A for your first reading response paper would earn you  $4.0 * 0.15 = 0.6$  points towards your final grade. Your final letter grade is based on the following scale:

Total Earned Final Grade Points	Final Letter Grade
4.0 – 3.84	A
3.83 – 3.50	A-
3.49 – 3.17	B+
3.16 – 2.84	B
2.83 – 2.50	B-
2.49 – 2.17	C+
2.16 – 1.84	C
1.83 – 1.34	C-
1.34 – 1.0	D
0.99 and below	F

*Grade Complaints:* I will grade your performance in this course in comparison to your fellow students as well as predetermined expectations. This means that the grade you earn should be a fair representation of how you have performed in comparison both to my general expectations of all participants as well as your fellow classmates' work in this course.

It is possible that you may be unhappy with a grade, and I am always willing to discuss your progress during the course to help you improve. If you believe the grade you received is an **incorrect** assessment of the quality of the work you produced, you can challenge your grade. If you want to do so, please email me to set up an appointment and send me a copy of your exam and a written description (approximately half a page) comparing your answers to those listed in the answer key that will be made available online after the exam, explaining why you believe your grade does not accurately represent the quality of the work you submitted. We will subsequently discuss your work and I will assess whether I believe your grade should be changed.

Before you contact me about your grade(s), consider the following things. First, the goal of a grade reassessment is to produce a grade that is a fair representation of your performance: this means that any errors that lowered your grade will be corrected, but any potential errors that *increased* it will also be adjusted. A regrading process can thus result in a higher grade, the exact same grade, or a lower grade than what you received through the original grading process.

Second, a grade challenge means you must make a **specific argument** about why you think the grading does not reflect the **quality** of your work. It is not enough to state that you are confused by your grade, or that you feel that it does not reflect the amount of time and effort you put into the course. While I understand that both of those feelings can be very frustrating, they are not arguments for why a grade is not correct and I will not entertain grading challenges based solely on these arguments. As you are assessing your work in comparison to my comments, make sure you do not just look at the things you did right but also those things you missed. Meaning, if you got an A- for something, you probably did really well but you got some things wrong or did not include them at all. Those are the things that cost you points. Pointing out all the things you *did* include are not an argument for why the grade is incorrect.

Additionally, students sometimes try to 'challenge' their grade through a roundabout way – effectively asking the instructor to defend why they received the grade they received without providing arguments for why they disagree with the grade. Please do not do this: if you think the grade is incorrect, identify what it is you think I did wrong and engage with me on that basis. If you cannot articulate why you think the grade is wrong, then that might just mean it is in fact a correct assessment of your performance.

Finally, grades are not a negotiation: if you believe I made a mistake, you should feel free to challenge the grade. But the correct use of this process is not to look at your different grades at the end of the semester and to try to up one, or multiple, grade(s) with the sole goal of collecting enough points to increase your final letter grade. If you want to ensure you get the

highest grade possible I would advise you to spend your time reaching out to me with questions *before* deadlines, and not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

*Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct:* All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University's code of conduct. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines. Note that this includes self-plagiarism – that is, taking (parts of) assignments you did for other courses and resubmitting them for this course. While self-plagiarism might seem like an innocent act, it means you did not do original work as required for this course. (Self-)plagiarism and other violations can lead to major negative consequences, including failing this course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

### Notes

Fordham generally provides me with a class list that includes your legal name. If you prefer to be addressed by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun, please do not hesitate to let me know. You can do so in our Zoom meetings, by email, or during an office hour appointment, whichever you prefer. Also, please correct me if I mispronounce your name or use an incorrect gender pronoun!

As a faculty member, I am – by law – a mandatory reporter and I am required to contact and provide information to Public Safety, the Dean of Students, or Fordham's Title IX Coordinator if I am provided with any information indicating that a Fordham student has been sexually harassed (verbally or physically), sexually assaulted, stalked, had domestic violence or dating violence occur in a relationship, or been a victim / survivor of any behavior that is prohibited by Fordham's Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures. Once reported, Fordham will seek to support any student and make efforts to stop the negative behavior, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects. It is important for you to be aware that there are three confidential places on campus where you can seek support or guidance from Fordham staff members who are **not** mandatory reporters: clinical counselors in Counseling & Psychological Services, pastoral counselors in Campus Ministry, and medical service providers in University Health Services. You can read more about this in the Student CARE brochure or visit [www.fordham.edu/care](http://www.fordham.edu/care) or [www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct) for more information.

If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional or mental health concerns, and/or gender, sexual, or domestic violence, Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can provide (free) assistance. The Rose Hill office of CPS is open Monday through Friday and can be reached by phone at 718-817-3725. CPS will be providing remote meetings as well as in-person services at Rose Hill. If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention contact Fordham's office of Public Safety at Rose Hill at 718-817-2222 (available 24/7).

## Course Materials

All readings for this course will be made available online through Blackboard (in the course modules available under Content).

## Course Syllabus

### Wednesday, July 7

Topic: Elections as (Historical) Institutions

Readings:

The Constitution of the United States.

Richard Bensch, "The American Ballot Box: Law, Identity and the Polling Place in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Studies in American Political Development* vol. 17 (Spring 2003) 1-27.

Scott C. James, "Patronage Regimes and American Party Development from 'the Age of Jackson' to the Progressive Era," *British Journal of Political Science* vol. 36, no. 1 (2006) 39-60.

### Monday, July 12

Topic: The Fundamentals vs. How Campaigns Matter

Readings:

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) Chapters 1, 5 and 7.

Daron R. Shaw, *The Race to 270: The Electoral College and the Campaign Strategies of 2000 and 2004* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) Chapters 3 and 5.

### Wednesday, July 14

**Assignment: Submit first reading response paper on Blackboard.**

Topic: Vote Choice: Are Voters Rational?

Readings:

Keith Dowding, "Is it Rational to Vote? Five Types of Answer and a Suggestion," *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* vol. 7, no. 3 (August 2005) 442-459.

Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, "Blind Retrospection: Why Shark Attacks Are Bad for Democracy," working paper (2013).

Anthony Fowler and Andrew B. Hall, "Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections? Reassessing a Prominent Finding on Voter Competence," *The Journal of Politics* vol. 80, no. 4 (2018).

## **Monday, July 19**

Topic: Race, Gender, and Class in American Elections

Readings:

Antoine J. Banks, *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014) Chapter 1.

Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, "Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition," *American Political Science Review* vol. 108, no. 3 (2014) 499-519.

Nicholas Carnes, "Why Are There So Few Working-Class People in Political Office? Evidence from State Legislatures," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* vol. 4, no. 1 (2016) 84-109.

## **Wednesday, July 21**

Topic: Voting: Who Gets to Vote? And Do Non-Citizens Vote?

Readings:

**Assignment: Submit second reading response paper on Blackboard.**

Richard M. Valelly, "How Suffrage Politics Made, and Makes, America," in Richard M. Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

Jesse T. Richman, Gulshan A. Chattha, and David C. Earnest, "Do Non-Citizens Vote in U.S. Elections?" *Electoral Studies* 36 (2014) 149-157.



Michael Tesler, ["Methodological challenges affect study of non-citizens' voting."](#)  
*Washington Post – The Monkey Cage*, October 27, 2014.

## **Monday, July 26**

Topic: Get Out the Vote, Campaign Visit Effects, and TV advertisements

Readings:

Alan Gerber and Donald Green, "The Effects of Personal Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review* vol. 94 (2000) 653-663.

Boris Heersink, Brenton D. Peterson, Jordan Carr Peterson, "Mobilization and Counter-Mobilization: The Effect of Candidate Visits on Campaign Donations in the 2016 Presidential Election," *The Journal of Politics* (Forthcoming).

Ted Brader, "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 49, no. 2 (2005) 388-405.

## **Wednesday, July 28**

Topic: Research Methodology in Political Science

**Assignment: Submit one page final paper proposal on Blackboard.**

Readings:

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods* (Sage, 2016) Chapter 7.

Boris Heersink and Jeffery A. Jenkins, "Whiteness and the Emergence of the Republican Party in the Early Twentieth-Century South," *Studies in American Political Development* vol. 34, no. 1 (2020) 71-90.

## **Monday, August 2**

Topic: Research Proposal Workshops

Assignment: Share complete draft of final paper with group members.

Readings:

Read complete drafts of final papers of your group members and prepare comments.

### **Wednesday, August 4**

Topic: Writing Day

Assignment: Work on updating your final paper on the basis of feedback from group members.

Readings:

No readings.

### **Thursday, August 5**

Topic: Due date final paper.

Assignment: Submit final paper on Blackboard by 5 PM.

Readings:

No readings.