

POSC-4216: CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS SEMINAR

Fall 2023

Instructor: Boris Heersink

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Faber Hall 667

Office Hours: Monday, 12:30 – 2:30 PM, and by appointment on other times

Class Location and Time:

Faber Hall 668

Monday and Thursday, 8:30-9:45 AM

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 2024 presidential election quickly approaching, 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.

Basic Rules

In-Class: You are expected to be present in class every session, and to participate in Q&A during class. You should make sure that you come to class having read all the readings for each day, and you should participate actively in our conversation about those readings.

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).

Absences: 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). In line with Fordham's attendance policy you should report any excused absences with documentation by filling out the [Excused Absence Form](#).

I keep attendance and unexcused absences result in a lowering of your participation grade. Note that Fordham's official attendance policy is that for courses that meet twice a week it is not allowed to have more than four absences in total across the course – while having more than four unexcused absences does not automatically result in failing this course, excessive absences make it very difficult to receive a passing grade.

Covid Policies: As of right now there are no specific Covid policies in place in this course. However, if you are sick – Covid or otherwise – stay home, let me know, get medical care if necessary, and fill out the excused absence form. If you have any concerns or questions about any of this, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Office Hours

If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on **Monday between 12:30 and 2:30 PM** (unless otherwise noted). My office is in 667 Faber Hall. You do not need to make an appointment for this time slot and you do not need to have specific questions, I'm happy to discuss the course more broadly. Office hours are a really helpful way to get feedback and questions answered so make sure you use them! If you want to meet but cannot make it during my office hours, send me an e-mail and we will schedule a meeting. You can also e-mail me with any questions or concerns – I try to respond to every e-mail within 24 hours.

Grade

Components: Your grade is based on participation in class (20%), a midterm (20%), a research proposal paper (40%, divided across multiple assignments), and a take-home final exam (20%).

The midterm and final will both exist of a take-home exam with open ended essay questions regarding the readings and the material discussed in class. The midterm will cover all the material dealt with up until then and will take place on **October 12**. The final exam will cover the material dealt with after the midterm and will be scheduled to include our official exam date.

The research proposal will exist of a 10-to-12-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 (10% of the total paper grade), your subsequent updated proposal (20%), and the final paper you submit at the end of the semester (70%).

Throughout the course we will be discussing the question of how political scientists can test their claims using different research methodologies. On **October 23** we will use our class to talk about how to design a research project in political science and brainstorm potential ideas. On **October 27** you will submit a one-page proposal for the topic of your final paper; the research question you will be trying to answer, and a brief and basic outline of the methodological approach you will be taking in trying to answer your research question. You will receive feedback on this assignment and you can make any changes you want in response (including changing the question, or even the entire topic).

For **November 13** you will prepare for discussion in class a 5-page paper outlining your updated research question, a short initial literature review on the topic, and a basic outline of your updated methodological approach. On **November 17** you will submit this 5-page paper to me. On **December 4**, we will use all our class time to workshop full drafts of your proposal projects with other students. The final paper, which will include a more extensive literature review, updated discussion of your research question, and methodological approach, is due on **December 8**.

Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade: For the midterm and final you can earn up to 100 points. Those points subsequently are converted to a letter grade which builds towards your final course grade in line with the scale below. For your research paper assignments and participation you will receive a single letter grade which follows the point value outlined below.

Exam Points	Letter Grade	Points toward Final Grade
100-93	A	4.0
92-90	A-	3.7
89-87	B+	3.3
86-83	B	3.0
82-80	B-	2.7
79-77	C+	2.3
76-73	C	2.0
72-70	C-	1.7
69-60	D	1.0
59 and below	F	0.0

Your final grade is based on a weighted average of each of the points earned based on the percentages outlined above. For example, if you received a B+ for your midterm, that earns you $3.3 * 0.20 = 0.66$ points towards your final grade. Similarly, an A- for participation earns you $3.7 * 0.20 = 0.74$ 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 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 work and a written description explaining in detail 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. The re-grading process can thus result in a higher grade, the exact same grade, but also of 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. This is a non-negotiable part of a grade challenge: 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. Both of those feelings can be very frustrating! But they are not arguments for why a grade is not correct, and I will not entertain grading challenges based on these arguments.

Third, as you are assessing your work in comparison to the answer keys or my comments, make sure you do not just look at the things you did right: you also have to incorporate those things you missed or got wrong. For example, if you received an A- for a midterm, it is easy to list a variety of things you got right. But those things are what likely earned you the A-. The point of a grade challenge is to show that I incorrectly withheld points for things you got wrong or failed to discuss (in enough detail).

Fourth, students sometimes try to ‘challenge’ their grade through a roundabout way – effectively having the instructor defend why they graded the work the way they did. Often, those students do not provide arguments for why they disagree with the grade. If you are unsure what you did wrong and you would like me to clarify, I am of course always happy to do so. But I will not engage the ‘roundabout grade challenge’: if you think the grade is incorrect, then you think I made one or more mistakes and you have to identify what I did wrong. 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. 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* the exams and paper deadline, and not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

AI Use, Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct: All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University’s code of conduct. Generative AI tools are not permitted in this course. Students must rely on their own originality, creativity and critical thinking skills to complete assignments and engage with course material. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, relying on AI, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines. This includes self-plagiarism – meaning, cases where students re-use material they wrote themselves for other courses.

Notes

Fordham 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 class, by email, or during an office hour appointment – whichever you prefer. Also, please correct me if I ever mispronounce your name or use an incorrect gender pronoun!

Fordham’s Writing Center (in Walsh Library at Rose Hill and in Quinn Library at Lincoln Center) provides individualized assistance to students for writing assignments. You can make an appointment – free of charge! – to meet with someone who will read your paper and discuss it in detail with you. I strongly recommend using this system for your paper in this class and in other classes. You can sign up for an appointment at https://www.fordham.edu/info/20126/writing_center.

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 or 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. 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). If you prefer to access mental health services outside of Fordham, New York City provides free mental health support through NYC Well (<https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>).

Course Materials

Nearly all readings for this course will be made available online through Blackboard. The only exception concerns:

John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossmann, and Keena Lipsitz, *Campaigns & Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2022, 4th edition).

This book is available through the Fordham bookstore, as well as online bookstores. Note that the Fordham bookstore price matches textbooks with Amazon and Barnes and Noble on rentals and purchases (and that on Amazon the book might be cheaper than the price charged by the Fordham bookstore). The book listed is the 4th edition but any of the previous editions will be fine as well (the 1st edition misses a chapter, so maybe that would not be the best version to buy).

Course Syllabus

August 31

Topic: No class due to conference travel

Readings:

No readings.

September 4

Topic: No class due to Labor Day.

Readings:

No readings.

September 6

Note: this class is on Wednesday

Topic: Introduction to Political Science

Readings:

Amelia Hoover Green, "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps."

September 7

Topic: Elections as Political Institutions

Readings:

The U.S. Constitution

Sides et al, *Campaigns & Elections*, Chapters 1, 2, and, 9.

September 11

Topic: Elections as Historical Institutions

Readings:

Sides et al, *Campaigns & Elections*, Chapter 3.

Richard Benschel, "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.

September 14

Topic: Voting: The Secret Ballot

Readings:

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.

September 18

Topic: Voting Rights

Readings:

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).

Geoffrey Skelley, ["How The Republican Push To Restrict Voting Could Affect Our Elections."](#) *FiveThirtyEight*, May 17, 2021.

September 21

Topic: Are American Elections Fair?

Readings:

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.

Nate Cohn, ["Illegal Voting Claims, and Why They Don't Hold Up."](#) *New York Times*, January 26, 2017.

September 25

Topic: Vote Choice

Readings:

Sides et al, *Campaigns & Elections*, Chapter 13 [12 in 1st edition].

September 28

Topic: Are Voters Rational?

Readings:

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).

Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, "Statistics as If Politics Mattered: A Reply to Fowler and Hall," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 80, no. 4 (2018).

October 2

Topic: The Fundamentals: Do Campaigns Matter at All?

Readings:

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) Chapters 5 and 7. [**Note:** The PDFs include Chapter 1 – you can but do not have to read that chapter.]

October 5

Topic: How Campaigns Matter

Readings:

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.

October 9

Topic: No class due to Indigenous People's Day / Columbus Day.

Readings: No readings.

October 12

Topic: Take Home Midterm

Readings:

No readings.

October 16

Topic: Research Methodology in Political Science: Quantitative Methods

Readings:

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.

October 19

Topic: Research Methodology in Political Science: Experimental Methods

Readings:

Camille D. Burge, Julian J. Wamble, and Chryl N. Laird, "Missing the Mark? An Exploration of Targeted Campaign Advertising Effect on Black Political Engagement," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* vol. 8, no. 2 (2020) 423-438.

October 23

Topic: Research Proposal Workshop

Assignment: Prepare one-page summary of research question and possible methodological approach for discussion in class.

Readings:

Read the proposals of other students in your group.

October 26

Topic: Gender and Elections

Assignment: Submit one-page summary of research question and possible methodological approach.

Readings:

Jennifer L. Lawless, "Female Candidates and Legislators," *Annual Review of Political Science* vol. 18 (2015) 349-366.

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.

October 30

Topic: Economic Class and Elections

Readings:

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.

Nicholas Carnes and Eric R. Hansen, "Does Paying Politicians More Promote Economic Diversity in Legislatures?," *American Political Science Review* vol. 110, no. 4 (2016).

November 2

Topic: Race and 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.

Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) Chapters 1 and 6.

November 6

Topic: Get Out the Vote

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.

Brian Resnick, "[How to Talk Someone Out of Bigotry.](#)" *Vox*, January 29, 2020.

November 9

Topic: Campaign Visit Effects

Readings:

Boris Heersink and Brenton D. Peterson, "Truman Defeats Dewey: The Effect of Campaign Visits in Election Outcomes," *Electoral Studies* vol. 49 (October 2017) 49-64.

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* vol. 83, no. 4 (2021) 1878-1883.

Boris Heersink, Nicholas G. Napolio, Jordan Carr Peterson, "The Mixed Effects of Candidate Visits on Campaign Donations in the 2020 Presidential Election," *American Politics Research* vol. 50, no. 3 (2022) 320-325.

November 13

Topic: Research Proposal Workshop

Assignment: Prepare five-page (updated) summary of research question, hypotheses, and possible methodological approach for discussion in class.

Readings:

Read the proposals of other students in your group.

November 16

Topic: Campaign Ads

Assignment: Submit edited five-page summary of research question, hypotheses, and possible methodological approach.

Readings:

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.

Paul Freedman and Kenneth Goldstein, "Measuring Media Exposure and the Effects of Negative Campaign Ads," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 43, no. 4 (1999) 1189-1208.

Jonathan S. Krasno and Donald P. Green, "Do Televised Presidential Ads Increase Voter Turnout? Evidence from a Natural Experiment," *The Journal of Politics* vol. 70, no. 1 (2008) 245-261.

November 20

Topic: Candidate Selection: How do Parties Select Their Nominees?

Readings:

Larry M. Bartels, "Candidate Choice and the Dynamics of the Presidential Nominating Process," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 31, no. 1 (February 1987) p. 1-30.

Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) Chapter 7.

November 23

Topic: No class due to Thanksgiving.

Readings:

No readings.

November 27

Topic: Follow the Money

Readings:

Sides et al, *Campaigns & Elections*, Chapter 4.

Robert E. Mutch, *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) Chapter 9.

November 30

Topic: Paper Q&A

Readings:

No readings.

December 4

Topic: Research Proposal Workshop

Assignment: Complete full draft of your final paper for discussion in class.

Readings:

Read the papers of other students in your group.

December 7

Topic: Catch-up Day and Q&A

Readings:

No readings.